SUPER BBC

AESTHETICISM

MOTONI MODORU

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"Recruiting - Housekeeper
(If possible, a handsome boy.)
Good at miso soup."

Misu, a young and attractive man on the verge of adulthood, answers the poster of popular mystery author, Shino. This is the story of the fleeting love between two men swaying between philos and eros.

Motoni Moderu presents the aesthetics of man in a collection of classical masterpieces including a 43-page story never before published by Libre.

SUPER BE × BOY COMICS
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Motoni Moooru

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AFTERWORD 208
Written for this book

Every time I passed by, he would be standing there.
looking at the notice I had written
Mass recruitment!
(One person)
Recruiting Housekeeper
(If possible, a handsome boy)
Good at miso soup
Hōjō
ヴィスコンティの
映画(えいが)のように
Like a Visconti Movie

And of course, good at miso soup.
A house-keeper but also a handsome boy.
He probably succumbed to the temptations of the season.
It was a hot summer that year
MISU-KUN S WANT A CHANGE OF MOOD. MAKE ME SOME MISO SOUP
My name is Shino Hojo.
At that time, I was a popular mystery writer having switched from classical literature seven years ago

I SLEPT WITH THE LAST HOUSEKEEPER AFTER ONE WEEK
Instead of having boyish looks he showed his age. Still, I had taken a liking to him
nod
This was Misu-kun then 19 years old
Clunk
I'm a person who feigns wickedness with the lower half of my body
nod
Something becomes bothersome, I sleep with it
BUT THAT WAS A SLOW ONE THE FASTEST ONE WAS AFTER SEVEN MINUTES
I'M RATHER POPULAR
nod
MISU-KUN ARE YOUR POTATOES CUT INTO ROUND QUARTER SLICES AT HOME?
SIP

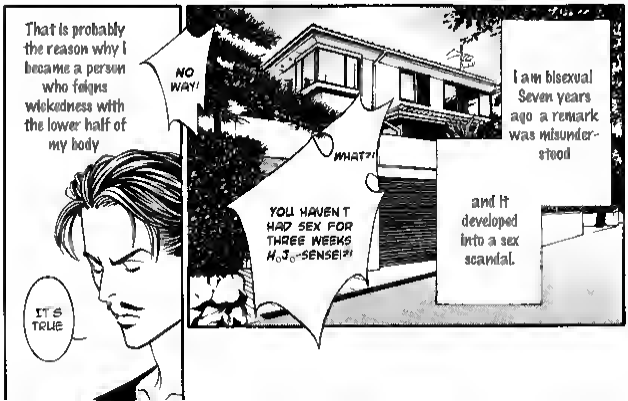
AT MINE TOO
RECTANGULAR ONES ARE HARD TO EAT AND ANNOYING
THEY'RE LIKE FRENCH FRIES AND I HATE THEM.
YOUR MISO SOUP IS GOOD, MISU-KUN
IT'S JUST LIKE MOTHER'S IT AFFECTS THE HEART MORE THAN AN AMOROUS GLANCE
clunk
I REMEMBER THAT MY MOTHER OFTEN SAID THE SAME THING
nod
KEEP ME COMPANY FOR A LITTLE WHILE LONGER MISU-KUN
THE HOUSE-KEEPER BEFORE THE LAST WAS A MAN
I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU THE STORY?
nod
WELL, LISTEN TO IT ONE MORE TIME

On the other side of the polished glass window I see cumulonimbus clouds
I WONDER, IS THERE SUCH A THING AS PLATONIC LOVE?
nod
nod
WHENEVER I INVITED HIM FOR AN AFTERNOON NAP LIKE THIS HE'D SLIP OFF HIS UNDERWEAR
IT'S A NAP, YOU KNOW...?
THERE'S NOTHING BEHIND IT
I LIKE THE KIND IN VISCONTI* MOVIES
BUT I HATE YOUR MYSTERY NOVELS, HAJI-SAN
YEAH, YOU'VE TOLD ME THAT BEFORE
YOU SAID THAT MY WORKS ARE LIKE "FLESH," RIGHT?
IN THAT CASE, MY FANS ARE PROBABLY THE INCARNATION OF EROS*
AND BECAUSE YOU HATE MY WORK, YOU MUST BELIEVE IN PHILOS*
nod
nod

DID YOU CALL ME "SHINO-SAN" JUST NOW?
MISU-KUN
GREASY FLESH
DON'T THEY SAY THAT THE WORKS OF AN AUTHOR REFLECT THEIR PSYCHE?
NO, THEY'RE DIFFER-ENT.
YOUR MYS-TERIES ARE "FLESH," SHINO-SAN.
SHINO-SAN

AN AESTHETIC NAME SUITS YOU BETTER
Behind those rimless glasses, I saw philos
YOU WHO RECRUITS HANDSOME BOY HOUSEKEEPERS THAT ARE GOOD AT MAKING MISO SOUP
I HAVE THE RIGHT TO CALL YOU BY A BEAUTIFUL NAME
AND SPEND YOUR SUMMER AS THOUGH YOU WERE IN A VISCONTI MOVIE
HAVE A RIGHT TO PUT ON MAHLER'S FIFTH"

An elderly man* travels to Venice. There he gazes upon a beautiful boy.
Occasionally catching his glimpses.
The boy takes in his glances as though to tempt him.
They exchange looks full of meaning, but never even have a conversation.
SO, YOU'RE A PERSON OF BEAUTY, MISHI-KUN?
ADAGIETTO
"DEATH IN VENICE." HUH?!


That is probably the reason why I became a person who feigns wickedness with the lower half of my body
IT'S TRUE
NO WAY!
WHAT?!
YOU HAVEN'T HAD SEX FOR THREE WEEKS H○J○-SENSEI?!
I am bisexual Seven years ago a remark was misunderstood
and it developed into a sex scandal.

I'm a person who feigns wickedness with the lower half of my body
I'M NOT!
THANKS TO THAT, I FINISHED MY MANUSCRIPT EARLY
THEN YOU MUST BE ABSOLUTELY FAMISHED, SENSEI!
YOU'RE DOING IT WITH YOUR HOUSEKEEPER AGAIN, AREN'T YOU?
RISA, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
YOU MUST BE FAMISHED AFTER ALL
SCARY...
Those who don't know it's only a pretence
flock around me.
WHY DID YOU BRING THIS GUY ALONG?
I WAS TRYING TO BE CONSIDERATE
AS THANKS FOR COMPLETING THE MANUSCRIPT EARLY
I'M A FOLLOWER OF YOUR WORKS YOU KNOW?
AND THEN YOU GO AND SLEEP WITH YOUR HOUSEKEEPER
HOW CRUEL, SENSEI
GEEZ, RISA!!
I
CAN BE YOUR HOUSEKEEPER OF THE NIGHT

Luchino Visconti – Born 2nd of November, 1906; Luchino Visconti di Modrone was born into a large, noble and wealthy family. He wrote the screenplay for and directed his first film in 1943, entitled Ossessione. Visconti had a critically acclaimed film career, especially his earlier works. An openly homosexual man, his movies often evolved around the delicate balance between friendship and love.

Death in Venice – *Death in Venice*, based upon the novella by Thomas Mann and directed by Luchino Visconti, is a film about an elderly avante-garde composer named Aschenbach (played by Dirk Bogarde) who travels to Venice to escape his stressful life. Staying at the same hotel is the 14 year-old Tadzio (played by Bjorn Andrésen). Aschenbach sees a beauty in Tadzio that he had always hoped to find and he becomes infatuated. The two of them never speak to one another, though Aschenach sometimes openly stares at the boy and Tadzio openly stares back at him. Not before long, Aschenbach learns that the city is being swept by a cholera epidemic but he spontaneously decides to stay near Tadzio. In the climactic scene of the movie, with Mahler's Adagietto playing, Aschenburg sits on the beach and watches as Tadzio fights with one of his older playmates. At the crescendo of the Adagietto, Aschenburg dies of a heart attack, unknown to Tadzio.

Aesthaticism – What Aschenburg feels for Tadzio is not a typical love or sexual desire. It is important to understand this because this is the whole point of Motoni Modoru's *Like a Visconti* and indeed, her overall theme of aestheticism. Tadzio was admired with a certain amount of obsession, like any follower of the Aesthetic movement would have done during the late 19th Century. Before this period in time literature, fine art and interior design had to have a purpose or a moral or social theme. Aestheticism was based upon the individual enjoyment of the piece, rather than a preconceived function. *"Art for art's sake."* Followers of the movement were known as aesthetes and they were often referred to as members of the Cult of Beauty.

Aestheticism then ties into Motoni's theme of emotion and desire. Fans of the mangaka may well have read before her series titled *Koi ga Bokura wo Yurusu Hani*. The story deals with two men, friends from college, who struggle to understand their complex relationship. At what point does friendship become desire and at what point does desire become love? They begin to test the boundaries between desire and love – and this is what Like a Visconti attempts to do.

Philos and Eros – Far earlier than the late 19th Century, two prolific Greek philosophers, Socrates and Plato, explored the themes of love and the soul. Plato believed that there existed three states of the soul. The first was *logos* which is the understanding and reasoning. The second is *thymos* which is the emotion or spirit, followed by *eros*, in this case referring to desire and appetite. Plato believed that to function well, all three segments of the soul had to operate in harmony.

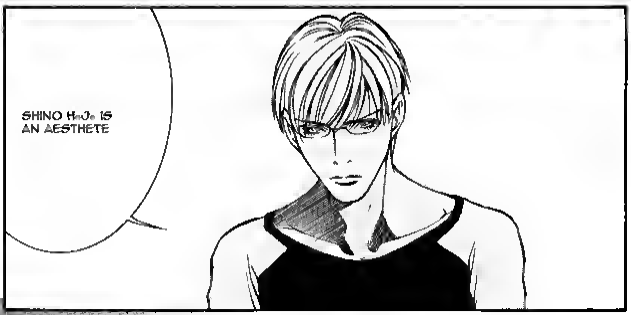
In the case of *platonic love* and *sexual desire*, Socrates was the first to write about the four types of love, two of which we explore in this tankoubon. *Philos*, or more modernly known as *philia*, refers to love free from sexual desire. Eros refers to desire and longing, though not always sexual. The two philosophical stances have given way to popular movements in art and literature. One such example is courtly love. Prevalent during the 12th Century, in which many educated men loved and idolized beautiful, and most importantly, unattainable women and swore by a code of chivalry. Beauty and love did not find themselves at the forefront once again until the late 19th Century, where a number of movements sprang up, including a short-lived resurrection of courtly love.

Why were desire and platonic love changed to *eros* and *philos*? The terms were changed for a couple of important reasons. Firstly, they have a more deeply historical context and thus a more accurate meaning than our modern terminology. The two terms, though not directly used by aesthetes all of the time, are closely and historically linked to the idea of beauty and the aesthetic movement. The relationship between Shino and Misu is a strong exploration of aestheticism and the philosophy of love, brilliantly backed with its reference to Visconti and *Death in Venice*. Perhaps more importantly, we wanted to show just how culturally rich and complex a yaoi oneshot can be in the hands of one of the most intelligent and talented mangaka working today.

SHINO-SAN TRULY BELIEVES IN PHILOS. HE ISN'T A SLAVE TO LUST.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
Chuckle
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.
DO YOU READ SENSEI'S BOOKS?
Snort
Philos?
DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND DESPITE READING SENSEI'S BOOKS?
IF YOU COMPRISE THYMOS* AND EROS, EMOTION AND DESIRE, YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE REALITY BEHIND THEM BOTH.
IN ESSENCE, IT'S CALLED PLATONIC LOVE.
SPIRITUAL LOVE IS DEEPER THAN THE FLESH.

FOR SHINO HOJO, IF HE CAN OBTAIN BEAUTY, THEN LOVE - LET ALONE SEX - IS UNNECESSARY.
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF IT'S A MAN OR A WOMAN...
...BECAUSE HE DISCOVERS BEAUTY THROUGH PHILOS AS WELL.
"LIKE A VISCONTI MOVIE." "ROMANTIC" AND "TRANSFIGURED NIGHT"
BEAUTY IS GIVEN PRIORITY OVER THE STORYLINE AND ITS MORAL. YET, THEY ARE ALL MASTERPIECES.
HE IS AN AESTHETE."
FROM THE LIKES OF WILDE, VISCONTI AND MISHIMA...
HUH?
"TRANSFIGURED NIGHT"...?
IT'S A SHORT STORY FROM MY CLASSIC LITERATURE DAYS
IT'S BEEN OUT OF PRINT FOR A LONG TIME
RECENT WORKS TOO
"BRAVE OF THE NIGHT DEMON," PAGE 87...

MISU-KUN...
THEY'RE SILENTLY HIDDEN, THOSE BEAUTIFUL WORDS.
"PITCH BLACK," PAGE 39. "WOLF OF PLÉ: SLIDE," PAGE 105. "DEVIL'S REMORSE," PAGE 203.
"LONE DOLPHIN," PAGE 161, THE SCENE CHANGED WITH, "THE SEA WAS WOVEN WITH THREADS OF PALE BLUE AND PURPLE FROM THE SETTING SUN".
"A FISH SILENTLY BROKE THROUGH THE SURFACE OF THE LAKE, WHICH, BEATEN BY THE RAIN, HAD AT LENGTH TURNED A FOAMY GREEN."



They were without exceptional tricks, flashy developments or understated language.

Written with a world view which focused on absolutely nothing but beauty.
Those were my stories long ago.
MISU-KUN...
YOU DON'T THINK I HAVE TALENT IN WRITING MYSTERIES TOO?
YOU HAVE TALENT, SHINO-SAN BUT...
SEVEN YEARS AGO YOU SAID "I AM A PERSON OF BEAUTY."
I WAS MISUNDERSTOOD AS A PEVERT AND MY SEX LIFE WAS EXPOSED
THAT WAS WHEN MY FIRST MYSTERY SOLD RIDICULOUSLY WELL, RIGHT?
I WAS 10 YEARS OLD
I READ ALL OF YOUR LITERARY WORKS
AND THEN I SEARCHED FOR THOSE GLIMPSES OF BEAUTY WITHIN YOUR MYSTERY STORIES
THERE WAS A LITERARY SENSE IN THAT NOTICE YOU POSTED...

Mass recruitment!!
(one person)
Housekeeper
Miso
If possible,
IT'S YOUR SPECIALTY REALITFUL STORIES ABOUT PLATONIC LOVE.
THE MORE YOU WOULD YEARN FOR THE BOY AND THE MORE YOU WOULD BE UNABLE TO TOUCH HIM
THE CLOSER THAT TASTE WOULD BE TO A MOTHER'S COOKING.
ACCORDING TO YOU, THE ALLURING "HANDSOME BOY"
WOULD MAKE "MISO SOUP" A SYMBOL OF A HOME
Hōjō
...THEN I'M ASCHENBACH.
AND I'LL DIE IN THE END.
"WHY NOT COME HERE AND SPEND A SUMMER LIKE A VISCONTI MOVIE?"
I THOUGHT I'D READ THAT.
WELL...
I'M A BIT OLD FOR TADZIO, MYSELF.

I'M PROBABLY KONRAD.
AND I'LL DIE IN AN EXPLOSION IN THE END.
"Conversation Piece," huh?
A cold evening shower fell that day in late August.

Shino-san, Shino-san!
Please lend me a towel.
Splash
Splash
YEAH YEAH
HERE S...
Pour
I'M COMPLETELY SOAKED...

SHINO-SA-
I'M SORRY, SHINO-SAN
DID THE LAUNDRY GET WET...?
PLEASE TAKE A BATH...
Hop
Slip

SHINO-SAN, THANK YOU FOR THE CHANGE OF CLOTHES.
YEAH ...
THOUGH I DON'T KNOW HOW TO TIE AN OBI...
TUSHE
TUSHE
YOU'RE VERY SKINNY, AREN'T YOU, MISH-KUN?

rustle
YOUR YUKATA IS BIG SHINO-SAN
IT'S FINE
YOU WEAR IT WELL.
YOU'RE LOVELY
IT'S FROM WHEN I WAS YOUNG.
THERE

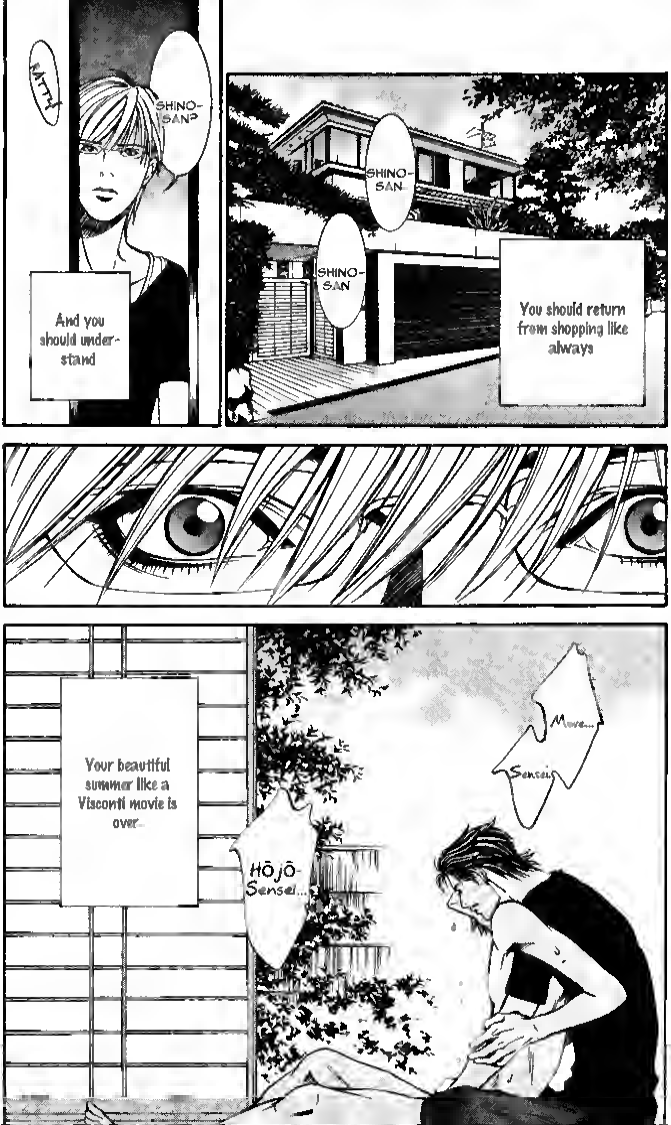
— I can't take it anymore.
SHINO-SAN
YOU'RE ALSO LOVELY
YOUR EXISTENCE ITSELF IS BEAUTIFUL SHINO-SAN

Enough...
I realized seven years ago that beauty can never be obtained.

That day, I put on Mahler's Adagietto and cried

I wept for our inability to make beauty and I wept because beauty cannot be understood

Ahh, Shino. You are a fool. You won't die like Aschenbach.


Hmm
SHINO-SAN?
And you should understand
SHINO-SAN
SHINO-SAN
You should return from shopping like always
Your beautiful summer like a Visconti movie is over...
HŌJŌ-Sensei...
Move...
Sensei

"Let me embrace..."
Ah...
I provoke you.
"Let me embrace you..."
No way...
You can't, Shino-san...
How cruel.

The flowers are scorched in the summer heat.
ARE YOU JEALOUS, MISU-KUN?
slap

creak
I'M NO LONGER A PERSON OF BEAUTY.
THUD
YOU REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT MOVIE.
ASCHENBACH DIDN'T CREATE BEAUTY.
HE DID NOTHING MORE THAN FALL IN LOVE WITH THE BEAUTY THAT GREW PERFECT BEFORE HIS EYES.

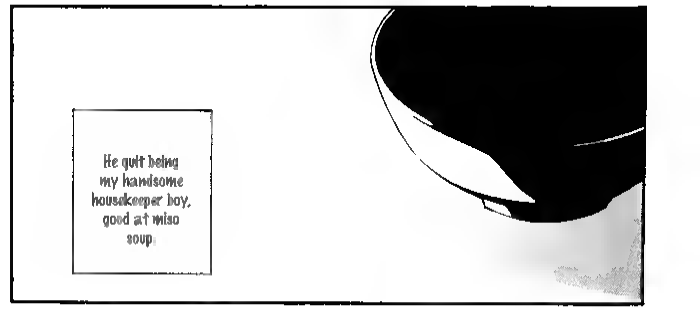
I'M NOT ASCHENBACH
I WON'T DIE IN A PLACE LIKE VENICE
AND I WON'T DIE ON THE BEACH
AS THE MAKEUP MELTS OFF MY FACE WITH SMILES AND TEARS

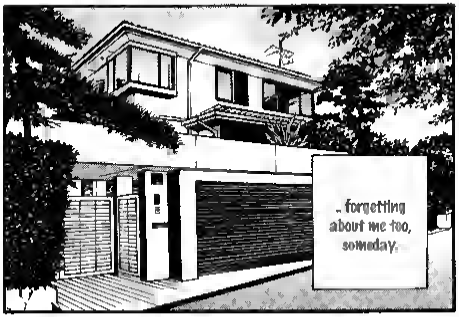
ARE YOU FEELING IT?
YOU SHOULD FEEL IT, SO MUCH THAT YOU BREAK
INDULGE IN EROS MAKE UNSIGHTLY FACES
SHOULD BE SMASHED TO PIECES
IDEALS OF REALITY

I'LL SHATTER YOUR BEAUTIFUL SUMMER
...LEAVING A SCAR THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME.
...AND WITH A SHARD OF THAT BROKEN SUMMER
I'LL WOUND YOUR HEART
How cruel...

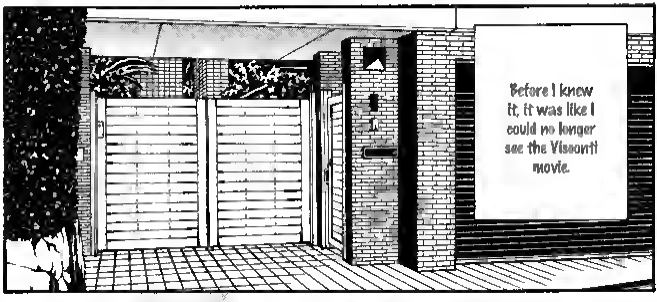
DESTROYING YOUR SUMMER—
—WILL BE THE MEMORY I HOLD OF MINE

It was a hot summer that year. I think I succumbed to the temptations of the season.


He quit being my handsome housekeeper boy, good at miso soup.

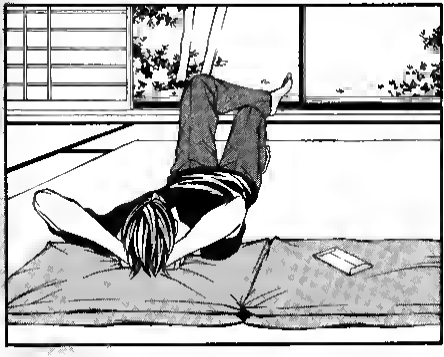


He will probably end up...



Chirp chirp

Chirp chirp



However,
I'm wounding your heart with a shard of your broken summer.
Misu.
my words were even more beautiful
in the letter Misu-kun gave me.

Like a Visconti Movie/END

執事特集

かしずかれると、胸がせつない。

オール新作読み切り

名探偵ものが
両翼
小悪魔ぼっ
ドキ丸胸男
一枚マネ
酷室カフ
天然ボケの

門陣間丸
池玲文
本仁戻

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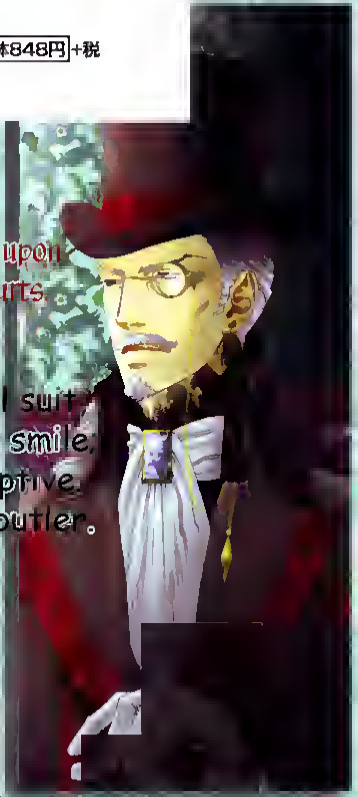


When you wait upon me, my chest hurts.

Wearing a swallowtail suit,
With a stoic, archaic smile,
you hold my heart captive.
A sinner... you are a butler.

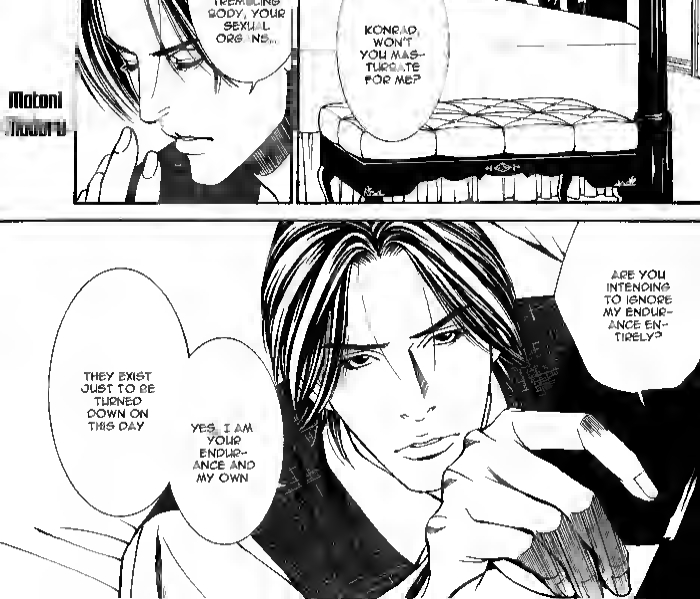
ミズナ島 ～エルイー～
桑原水菜

巻中企画
「執事のお仕事」

知っているようで意外と知らない
「執事」という麗しいお仕事。
神秘のベールに包まれた彼等の
さまざまなお仕事を一緒に覗いてみませんか？
イラスト／桑原祐子 長谷川みき子 フジワラモトヨ

Cover Illustration/円陣闇丸
Illustration/池玲文

romantic
Matoni
Tsuburu
I WANT TO SEE THE DIRTY SIDE OF YOU
I WANT TO SEE YOUR AGONIZED FACE, YOUR TREMBLING BODY, YOUR SEXUAL ORGASMS...
KONRAD, WON'T YOU MASTURBATE FOR ME?
PLEASE DRINK THIS AND REST MASTER
AFTERWARDS I'LL-


ARE YOU INTENDING TO IGNORE MY ENDURANCE ENTIRELY?
YES, I AM YOUR ENDURANCE AND MY OWN
THEY EXIST JUST TO BE TURNED DOWN ON THIS DAY

More than kisses, more than sex, it is an obscenity. That's the relationship between us.
I, Konrad, have endured up till now for the sake of this day.
And that will bring us the pleasures of heaven.
Romantic
Motoni Modoru

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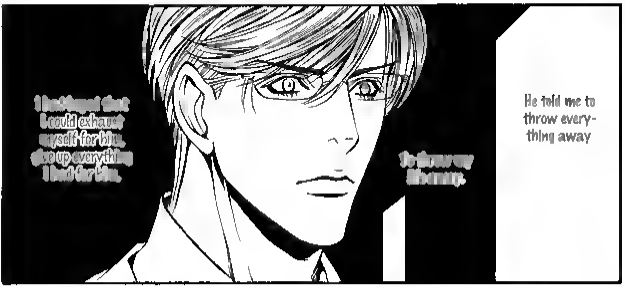
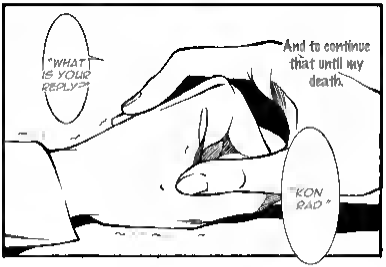
I BROUGHT YOU TO JAPAN SO I COULD LOVE YOU HERE
I WANT IT ALL OUT
I, Konrad Nernst, met him in Germany my home country
GIVE IT SOME TIME
AT LEAST AN HOUR.
AAH MASTER IF YOU SAY THAT...

We got along well.
Because of my father's job I spent part of my youth in Yokohama. When I became an adult due to being employed by the Japanese, I had many contacts with them.
Saying "I want an interpreter who can speak Japanese fluently" he hired me.
Because of these feelings we soon embraced each other.
At that time, it was a relationship between a viscount of a foreign land and a local interpreter


He told me to throw everything away
To throw my life away.
I had learned that I could exhaust myself for him, give up everything I had for him.



This love and endurance...

"JA."

When he returned to Japan, he was showered with criticism and mockery
It was because he had brought home a foreign man and made him his butler
"VISCOUNT, HAVE YOU GONE MAD? IS THIS A PRANK YOU'RE PLAYING?"
"YOU MUST HAVE MADE A MISTAKE. HE SHOULD BE A LANGUAGE TEACHER."
"HE'S MY BUTLER."
"HE IS DILIGENT."
"I'M FINE WITH THIS."
"AND HE'S LOYAL."
"A FOREIGN BUTLER!"
"MUST HAVE BEEN LURED BY THAT WHITE SKIN."
"LOYAL HE SAYS."
"TO MAKE HIS FOREIGN MALE LOVER A BUTLER?"
"HE'D BECOME THE LAUGHING STOCK IN THIS WORLD!"
The criticism and mockery never stopped.

"NER"
"IT'S NERNST MY LADY"
"MY NAME IS KONRAD NERNST MY LADY"
"PLEASE CALL ME NERNST"
"YOU..."
Of course, my relationship with the wife was bad from the beginning.
"WHAT A STRANGE NAME I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER IT"
"THEN JUST NER! IS FINE"
"WHAT A STRANGE NAME I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER IT"
"SHIRO"
"SINCE YOUR SKIN IS FRIGHTFULLY WHITE I'LL CALL YOU SHIRO"
"Shiro" the name of a reared domestic animal, the same name as the dog.
SAN = SHIRO = WHITE

My job was to manage the servants but even they defied me
"SHIRO SAN"
"CALL ME NEPNST-SAN"
"SORRY I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER"
"SHIRO SAN"
"BUT MITSU-SAN"
"WHEN YOU STAND NEXT TO HIM IT HITS YOU"
"THAT GUY SMELLS GOOD"
"IT IS SAID THAT HIS BUTT IS SMELLY AFTER ALL!"
"GYA HA HA HA HA HA!"
"A DOG'S NAME IS BEFITTING!"
Because this head servant "Mitsu" is the leader of the servants...
"GYA HA HA HA HA HA!"
"THERE WILL DEFINITELY BE AN AWFUL SMELL FROM THE HAIR BELOW!"
"YOU'RE STILL A CHILD"
"JUST TRY SEDUCING HIM TO YOUR BED."

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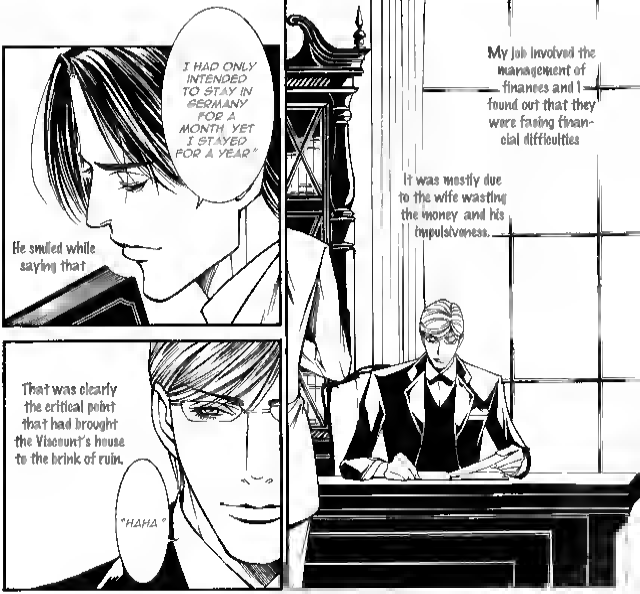
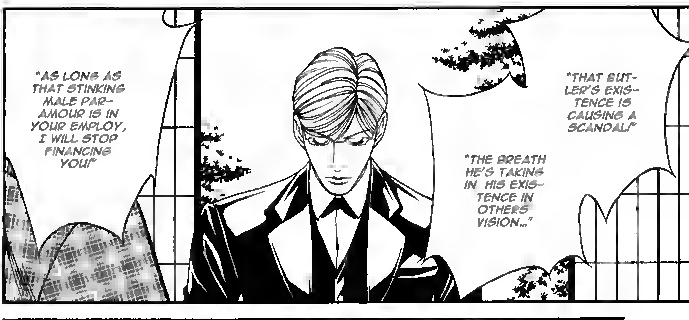
"MIT-SU"
"WHAT SHIRO-SAN?"
"MY PUBIC HAIR"
"PLEASE SMELL IT"
GRAB
!
I've also slept with many other servants, regardless of their gender.
Even if they were all person-alities, and not titles, and it was really me-we people.

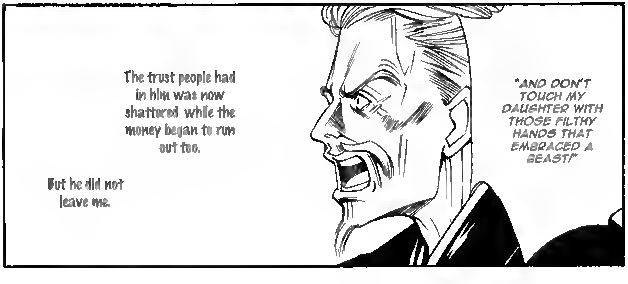
Beautiful things were everywhere.
For example, my reflection in his eyes and his voice calling my name.
"KONRAD."
"KONRAD."
He pronounced my name beautifully. He was the only one who called me "Konrad."
I allowed his wife to call me by a dog's name just so that she couldn't use "Konrad."


I HAD ONLY INTENDED TO STAY IN GERMANY FOR A MONTH, YET I STAYED FOR A YEAR"
He smiled while saying that
My job involved the management of finances and I found out that they were facing financial difficulties
It was mostly due to the wife wasting the money and his impulsiveness.
That was clearly the critical point that had brought the Viscount's house to the brink of ruin.
"HAHA"
"MOREOVER THAT BUTLER IS CAUSING A SCANDAL!"
The house held out due to the support of the magnates from his wife's family
"SWALLOWED BY THE OUTBREAK OF PANIC, ALL YOUR INVESTMENTS ARE LOST!"

<MAGNATES ARE BASICALLY PEOPLE WITH POWER, INFLUENCE OR AUTHORITY IN THIS CASE I'D ASSUME THAT THE WIFE'S FAMILY IS EITHER RICH BUSINESSMEN OR RICH NOBILITY WITH POLITICAL INFLUENCE. OBVIOUSLY THE WIFE'S FAMILY HAS MORE WEALTH AND POWER THAN THE VISCOUNT AND THUS LIKELY HIS REASON FOR MARRYING HIS WIFE. THIS WAS NOT AN UNCOMMON MARRIAGE PRACTICE FOR THE POOREST YET TITLED NOBILITY IN THIS TIME PERIOD.>

"FATHER-IN-LAW..."
"I'M CONVINCED BY THE LOOKS OF HIM!"
"IF SO, YOU DON'T NEED MY HELP ANYMORE!"
"INSTEAD, FOR MY SAKE HE HAD BROUGHT ME TWO NEW TRANSACTIONS--"
"FATHER-IN-LAW HE IS NOT STIRRING UP ANY SCANDAL"


"AS LONG AS THAT STINKING MALE PARAMOUR IS IN YOUR EMPLOY, I WILL STOP FINANCING YOU!"
"THE BREATH HE'S TAKING IN HIS EXISTENCE IN OTHERS VISION..."
"THAT BUTLER'S EXISTENCE IS CAUSING A SCANDAL!"


The trust people had in him was now shattered while the money began to run out too.
But he did not leave me.
"AND DON'T TOUCH MY DAUGHTER WITH THOSE FILTHY HANDS THAT EMBRACED A BEAST!"

"YOU SLEPT WITH THE SERVANTS?"
"I APOLOGISE."
"IT DOESN'T MATTER KONRAD."
"IT WAS ALL FOR MY SAKE SO IT WASN'T BETRAYAL."
"...USING DESIRE AS A BUSINESS TACTIC?"
"FOR MY SAKE YOUR PURE BODY IS GIVEN TO THE PIGS."
"I THINK THAT SORT OF SACRIFICE IS BEAUTIFUL..."
"IT'S PAINFUL AT THE SAME TIME" "WHILE I DREAMT OF YOU."

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In this guilty relationship, the more I doubt it, the more doubtful it becomes.
"Don't sleep with him," I thought strongly. He was the same.
I swore in my heart that I would never sleep with him.
"ARE THERE ANY INTERESTING ARTICLES?"
"AH..."
"MANCHUDIA IS IN A PERILOUS SITUATION."
"WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR BREAKFAST?"
"WE HAVE SOME DELICIOUS SOUP THIS MORNING."

"I WANT TO EAT THIS."
"YES."
"I WANT TO EAT THIS."
Shige

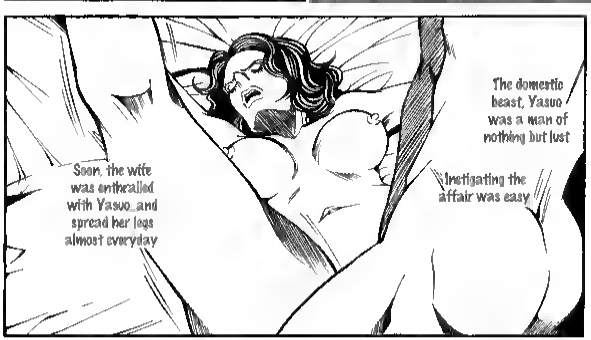
We wanted each other watched each other often agonized while wanting to touch
"I WANT TO EAT THIS."
"THEN I WILL GO PREPARE IT."
As if we didn't trust each other we exercised strict self-discipline and endured.
I believed that this endurance had deepened our love.
"KONRAD"

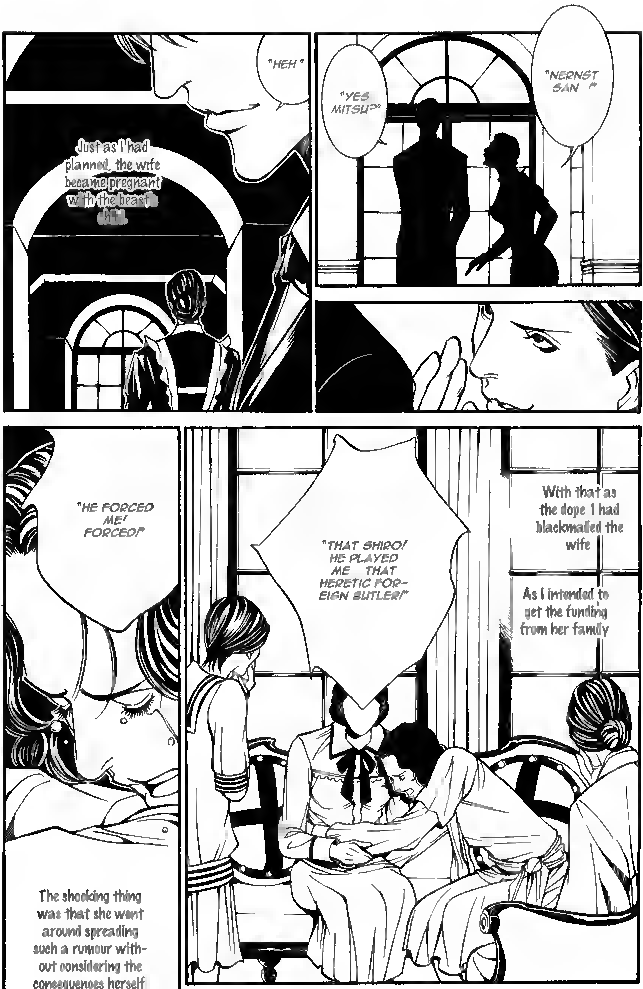
That was out of politeness to him, or perhaps it was part of my decorum as a butler.
I had also sworn never to sleep with the wife.
What I didn't like at all.
It was that because of my jealousy towards her I did not give in.
If I did give in to her sexual desire,
Her family would probably start refunding us.
She was hungry for sex. Her husband didn't embrace her and even when he did he disregarded her.

"YAS-UO"
"AH-"
"YOU MASTURBATED IN THE BACKYARD AGAIN"
"WAS THE MISTRESS ABLE TO SEE IT CLEARLY?"

I knew the wife's starvation well

"AAH.. SHE'S ALREADY YOUR PRISONER"


The domestic beast, Yasuo was a man of nothing but lust
Instigating the affair was easy
Soon, the wife was enthralled with Yasuo and spread her legs almost everyday


"HEH"
Just as I had planned, the wife became pregnant with the heart's child.
"YES MITSU?"
"NERNST SAN!"
"HE FORCED ME! FORCED!"
"THAT SHIRO! HE PLAYED ME THAT HERETIC FOREIGN BUTLER!"
With that as the dope I had blackmailed the wife
As I intended to get the funding from her family
The shocking thing was that she went around spreading such a rumour without considering the consequences herself

Has she finally gone mad? No she was like that from the beginning
Is it her retaliation or is it her obstinacy?
The father of the child in her womb is me?
That shallow woman! When the child is born the lie will be revealed immediately
But that is precisely the case. The one being attacked by society's criticisms was her husband for making me a butler
That pained me more than anything else.
And my biggest miscalculation was that he had believed his wife's words..
I can't protect him. My words can't reach anyone. I am the foreign paramour the pet dog that impregnates the wife while her husband is being mocked about his failure too.

Continued to plead...
"PLEASE BELIEVE ME."
"THAT'S NOT TRUE NOT TRUE."
She screamed, and I...
"I WAS RAPED BY SHIRO! IT'S SHIRO'S CHILD! SHIRO'S CHILD!"
That day the wife who seemed to have gone crazy..
"I
He...

"I."
"CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE!"

He...
Shot his wife
because he couldn't trust me.
WHY ?
MASTER

"As above, Testimony of head servant Mitsu it was difficult to forgive the many corruptions of the foreign butler Nemet."
He deserves a horrible death for the gruesome atrocities he committed towards the mistress, Hanako."
"Five days later, according to the authorities,
Arrangements were made for the body of Mitsu to be found."
"Also, all the evidence pointing to Nerst and his master as the revolting murderers will soon be found."
"Furthermore"
BE-CAUSE I LOVE YOU
KON-RAD
flutter
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IT'S FINE IF YOU DON'T...
LEAVE IT TO ME
IF WE HAVE FIVE DAYS I CAN STRIKE ANOTHER BARGAIN.
TO SAY THAT I KILLED YOUR WIFE...

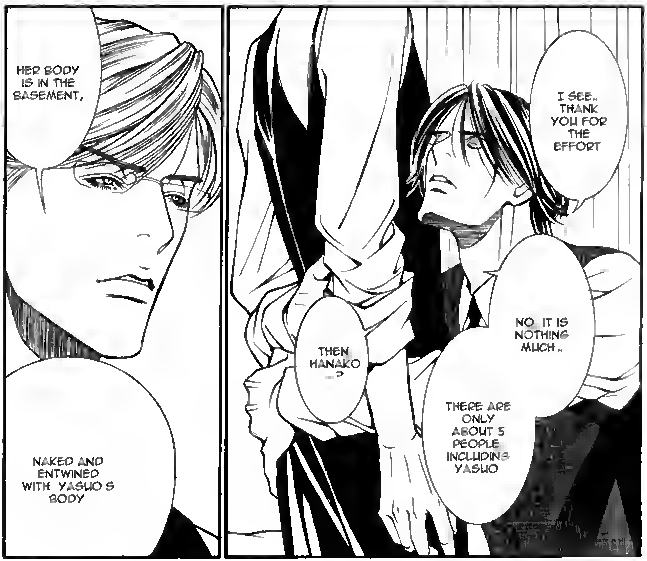
THE DAYS OF ENDURANCE ARE FOR NAUGHT. THERE'S NO LONGER ANY MEANING IN SELF-CONTROL.
MAS-TER.
THIS IS THE END.
THAT WAS WHY I SHOT THAT WOMAN
YES. TO CONTROL MYSELF...
AAH KONRAD!
I'M GOING CRAZY WITH JEALOUSY
I'LL KILL ANYONE WHO TOUCHES YOUR BODY!

NONE OF IT IS YOURS
THIS BODY...
THESE LIPS AND
THEY ALL BELONG TO ME

He kissed me. It was our first kiss

The sweetness, the corrupt pleasure...

I APOLOGISE
THANKS TO Y. SUO, I HAVE HANDLED ALL THE SERVANTS.
YOU'RE LATE, KONRAD.


HER BODY IS IN THE BASEMENT,
NAKED AND ENTWINED WITH YASUO'S BODY
I SEE.. THANK YOU FOR THE EFFORT
NO, IT IS NOTHING MUCH..
THERE ARE ONLY ABOUT 5 PEOPLE INCLUDING YASUO
THEN, HANAKO -?

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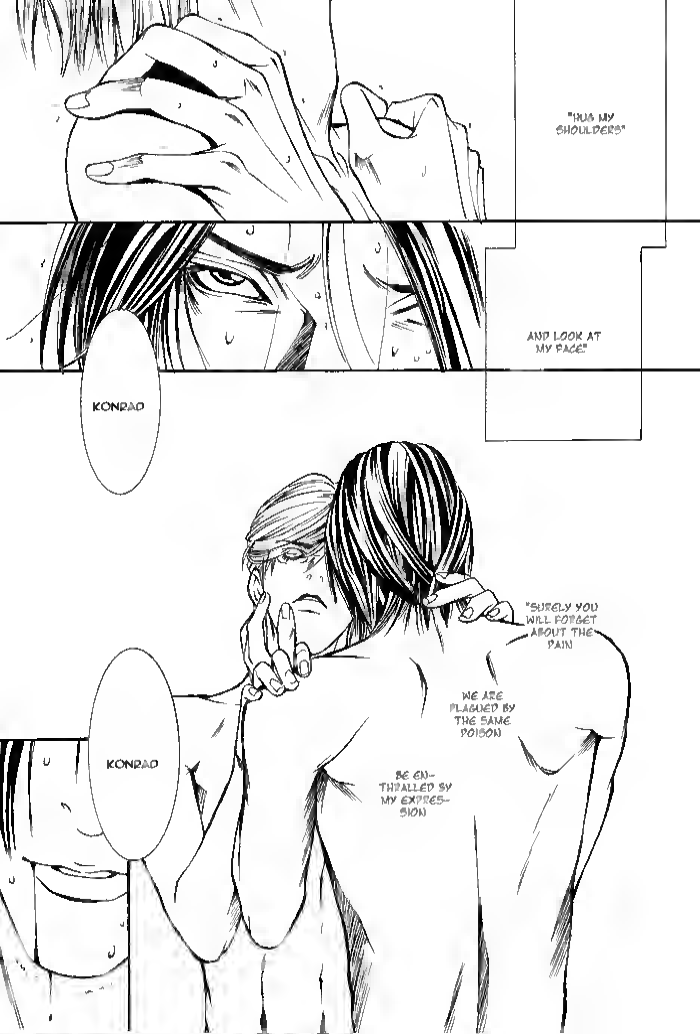
"OUR PLEASURE
IS LIFTED UP TO HEIGHTS OF WHICH THE HUMAN BODY CAN NEVER TASTE
AAH!
I'M DYING
AAH
"IN FIVE DAYS FROM NOW, THE FLOWER OF OUR CORRUPTION WILL BLOOM"
"AAH KONRAD!
WITH THAT WHITE ASS AND THE PENIS THAT SMELLS SO GOOD IT'S THE GREATEST SERVICE TO ME
"WITH THOSE RED LIPS AND THE TREMBLING TIP OF YOUR TONGUE"

"IT DOESN'T MATTER EVEN IF THERE IS PAIN"
FIVE DAYS FROM NOW WE'LL DRINK TO THIS AND HAVE A TOAST"
"DON'T WORRY THERE WILL BE NO PAIN
"IT IS THE MEDICINE THAT WILL BIND US TOGETHER FOR ETERNITY
"THAT IS...?"
THERE IS NO PAIN
BUT JUST IN CASE IT HURTS
HUG MY SHOULDERS AND LOOK AT MY FACE


"RUB MY SHOULDERS"
AND LOOK AT MY FACE"
KONRAD
"SURELY YOU WILL FORGET ABOUT THE PAIN
WE ARE PLAGUED BY THE SAME POISON
KONRAD
BE EN-THRALLED BY MY EXPRES-SION

The comforting voice called out to me.
Now enjoy it slowly
The romance that belongs to the two of us.
END

Translator's Notes:

Title Page:

Since this is the name of the piece I use the English title but the Japanese title for the same piece is closer to "Purified Night"

Pg. 04

Kanji specifies "Transfigured Night" for "this

Pg. 15.

Show me your porno... Kanji specifies "desire" for "porno"

The German here is from "Fruhling" ("Spring") of "Four Last Songs" and in English reads "In shadowy crypts // I dreamt long"

Now you appear // in all your finery // shining brilliantly // like a miracle before me."

Pg. 30:

Letter Lit Translation

"I can incessantly hear a worthless voice saying to eliminate the unsightly things distorted by fantasy that day as if they were garbage Saya" (The underlined portion reads 'Sister Killer')

Transfigured Night
浄められた夜

A MAN'S SEXUALITY SHOULD BE MORE GRITTY AND DIRTY.
I MEAN, IT'S JUST PORN, YOU KNOW?
ALTHOUGH THE MATERIAL IS GOOD, THE ESSENTIAL POINTS ARE BLAND OR TOO PRETTILY WORDED.
IN SHORT, YOU CAN'T JACK OFF TO IT!
YEAH...
YEAH...
YUKI, WRITE A LITTLE MORE SERIOUSLY.
YOU DON'T EARN ENOUGH TO EAT WITH THE MANUSCRIPT PAYMENTS SO YOU'VE ENDED UP DEPENDING ON YOUR SISTER'S HUSBAND, RIGHT?
BUT YOU KNOW
IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE YOUR SISTER'S SUICIDE
YOU HAVE TO BE AWARE THAT HE COULD KICK YOU OUT AT ANY TIME
But I think it's about time I stopped
The reason why I drag things on, slowly wearing away my life, is because I've always loved him

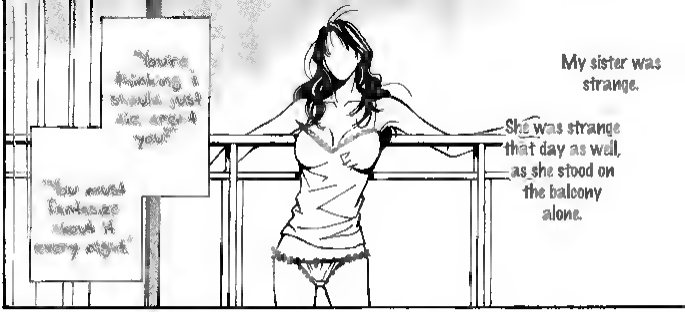
WELCOME BACK ANIKI
I hated her and thought about killing myself countless times.
CARE TO LISTEN WITH ME?
I M HOME YUKIO
I loved him, but he married my older sister.
WHAT'S THIS? "TRANSFIG-URED NIGHT" AGAIN?
I wrote gay pornography while I cried.
Using him as my model, I'd write gay porn that was nothing but pretty words no one could jack off to
IF YOU LISTEN TO THINGS LIKE THAT ALL THE TIME, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO WRITE PORN
AREN'T YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF WORK?
My sister doted on me and had me live with them in their newlywed home.

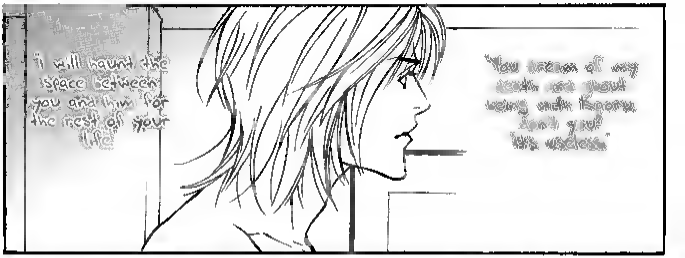
WITHOUT THIS MUSIC" I CAN'T WRITE PORN
I CAN'T WRITE...
In the end, my sister was the one to cross over. She, who hadn't even hinted at death
But I still keep on writing.
"That is your punishment, Yukio"
"I will haunt the space between you and him for the rest of your life"
"You'll remember me every time you see his face."
ANIKI
IT'S ABOUT TIME I LEFT THIS PLACE
THAT'S ODD.

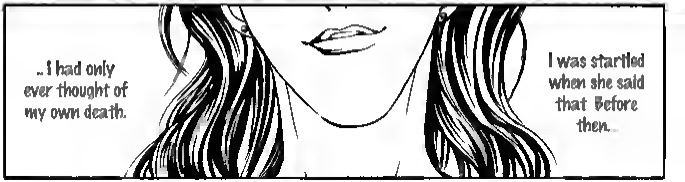
LEAVE...?
Chuckle
I MET WITH MY EDITOR TODAY
HE INCREASED MY WORKLOAD.
DON'T LISTEN TO THINGS LIKE "TRANSFIGURED NIGHT"
IT WON'T WORK OUT YOUR PORN DOESN'T EARN ENOUGH FOR YOU TO EAT
ANIKI.
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE, YOU HAVE TO START WRITING SERIOUSLY
ANIKI!
"TRANSFIGURED NIGHT" IS A PIECE ABOUT REPENTANCE

A WOMAN CONFESSES HER SIN
AND WHEN THE MAN FORGIVES HER SHE GAINS HIS LOVE
ARE YOU CONFESSING THROUGH PORNOGRAPHY?
OR PERHAPS THERE'S SOMEONE YOU WISH TO FORGIVE?
MAKE ME A PLAYLIST
PICK SOMETHING SUITABLE WHILE I TAKE A BATH.
I HAVE TOMORROW OFF AND IT'S BEEN A WHILE LET'S LISTEN TO IT TOGETHER

If I'm gay, it's largely my sister's fault.
My sister doted on me and played around with my body.
shut
"I love you Yuki. You're my little weather for life."
"What's up, dear? Make sure you take your medicine if you don't, Yuki, you won't become well."
I was something given to my sister... like a stuffed animal.
Thus I was taken from an orphanage in the country.
My sister and I weren't connected by blood. A daughter of great wealth, she selfishly insisted, "I want a beautiful younger brother."
"I'll have sex with Kaoru every night, but you won't be able to. I'll have you listen to our voices from the room next door."
"What do you like Kaoru? In that case, I'll make you Kaoru's little brother."
"It's your punishment, Yuki."


"You're thinking I should just die, aren't you?"
"You must fantasize about it every night."
My sister was strange.
She was strange that day as well, as she stood on the balcony alone.


I will haunt the space between you and him for the rest of your life.
"You scream at my words, and shout wrong with hysteria. Don't you? It's useless."


..I had only ever thought of my own death.
I was startled when she said that. Before then...

WHAT'S NEXT?
RAVEL DEDICATED IT TO FRIENDS WHO HAD DIED IN THE WAR
"LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN" HUH?

ANIKI, ABOUT WHAT I MENTIONED BEFORE...
FAURÉ'S "REQUIEM" CORROZ'S '79 VERSION
"FOUR LAST SONGS" WITH JANOWITZ
AND AFTER THAT?
THEY'RE ALL PIECES REVOLVING AROUND DEATH...
SPEAKING OF WHICH... SAYA'S SUICIDE NOTE WAS LEFT ON TOP OF MY DESK
NOTHING WILL COME FROM READING IT, DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO THROW IT AWAY?
IT WAS ADDRESSED TO YOU
IT'S ALREADY BEEN TWO YEARS. JUST READ IT
I DON'T WANT TO READ SOME WHINY LETTER FILLED WITH REASONS FOR DYING
He stubbornly avoids my sister's suicide note.

IT WOULD BE NICE IF HER NOTE WAS A BEAUTIFUL PIECE LIKE THAT
THERE'S NO COMPLAINT IN IT
"FOUR LAST SONGS" IS STRAUSS' BEAUTIFUL YET TRANSIENT FAREWELL NOTE, YOU KNOW
ANIKI...
YOUR PORNO IS A SUICIDE NOTE WITHOUT WRITING THE REASON FOR DYING
HA HA
IN THAT CASE, YOU ARE ALSO LIKE THAT PIECE
THAT'S EVASION, ANIKI
HOW YOUR BODY FEELS
HOW MUCH YOU DESIRE INDECENT ACTS
HOW MUCH DO YOU DEMAND THESE SHAMELESS THINGS?
IN WHAT WAY AND WHICH PARTS OF YOU TREMBLE?
BUT WHAT PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW IS

IF YOU DON'T WRITE ABOUT THAT KIND OF THING...
YOU'RE HIDING YOUR BODY'S LEWD, SEXUAL FEELINGS.
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO LEAVE
Aniki!
They aren't mine...
They belong to the characters in the porn
THEY'RE YOURS.
I KNOW...

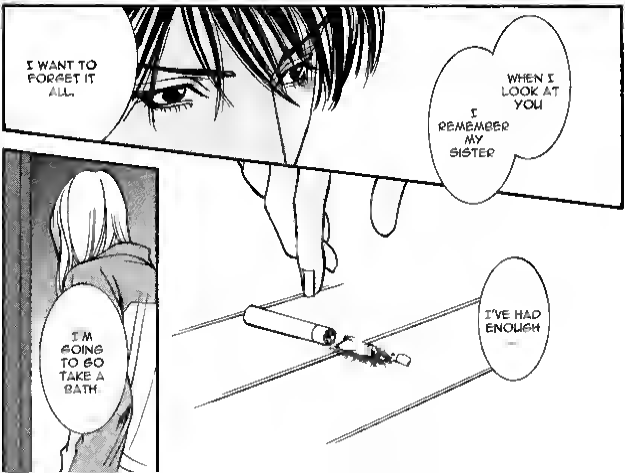
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF.
YOU'RE WRITING ME INTO YOUR PORNO, AREN'T YOU?
BUT IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE, YOU HAVE TO BE SURE TO WRITE ABOUT YOURSELF
NOT JUST ABOUT ME
You've got it wrong!
OF COURSE. YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT WRITING IT ON PURPOSE
IF YOU DON'T EARN ENOUGH TO EAT OFF PORNO, YOU CAN REMAIN DEPENDANT ON ME
AND THEN, MORE IMPORTANTLY YOU CAN END IT WITHOUT EXPOSING YOUR EMBARASSING FEELINGS

ANIKI!
I'M WRONG? ABOUT WHAT?
You're wrong.
I...
Smack
AREN'T YOU CONFESSING?
Please stop!
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO LEAVE
IF YOU WANT MY FORGIVENESS;
IF THAT'S THE CASE YOU HAVE TO CONFESS ALL OF YOUR SINS
YOU'RE CONFESSING TO ME THROUGH YOUR PORNOGRAPHY

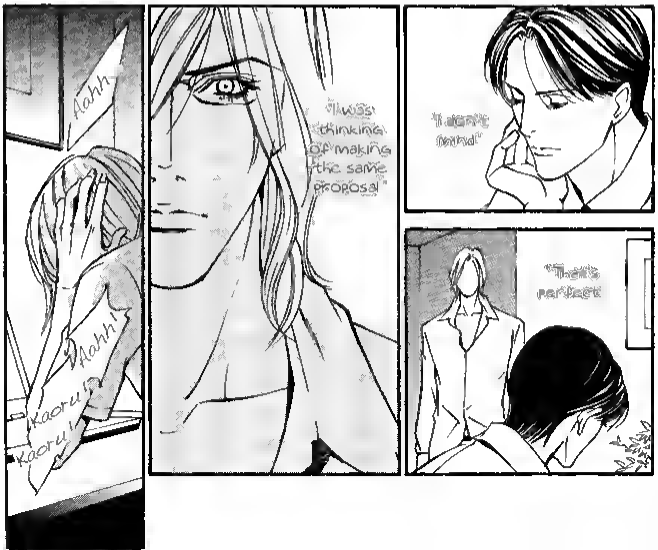
IF YOU WANT ME TO LOVE YOU...
TELL ME YOUR SINFUL WISHES
I'LL GRANT THEM FOR YOU
IF YOU WANT MY PORN
SO...
I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU.

COME ON
OPEN YOUR MOUTH
Ich stöhnte ganz leise
brannte ich lang
SHOW ME YOUR PORN
Nun liegst du erschlossen
Im Glanz und Zier
Von Liebe umgossen
Wie ein Wunder vor mir

MY WISH
IS TO LEAVE THIS PLACE
ANIKI...

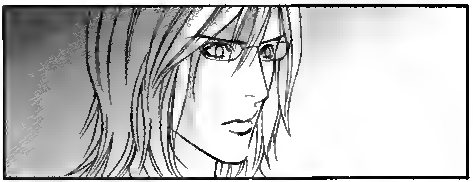

I WANT TO FORGET IT ALL.
WHEN I LOOK AT YOU I REMEMBER MY SISTER
I'VE HAD ENOUGH...
I'M GOING TO GO TAKE A BATH.

YOUR SISTER'S SUICIDE NOTE
I'VE RETURNED IT TO YOUR ROOM
YUKIO
"You want to marry me, right?"
"Prepare a room for Yukio in our new home."
"I don't want to be parted from my little brother."


Aahh
Kaoru!?
Aahh
Kaoru!?
"I was thinking of making the same proposal."
"I can't mind."
"That's perfect."

I hated hearing the voices of their coupling every night

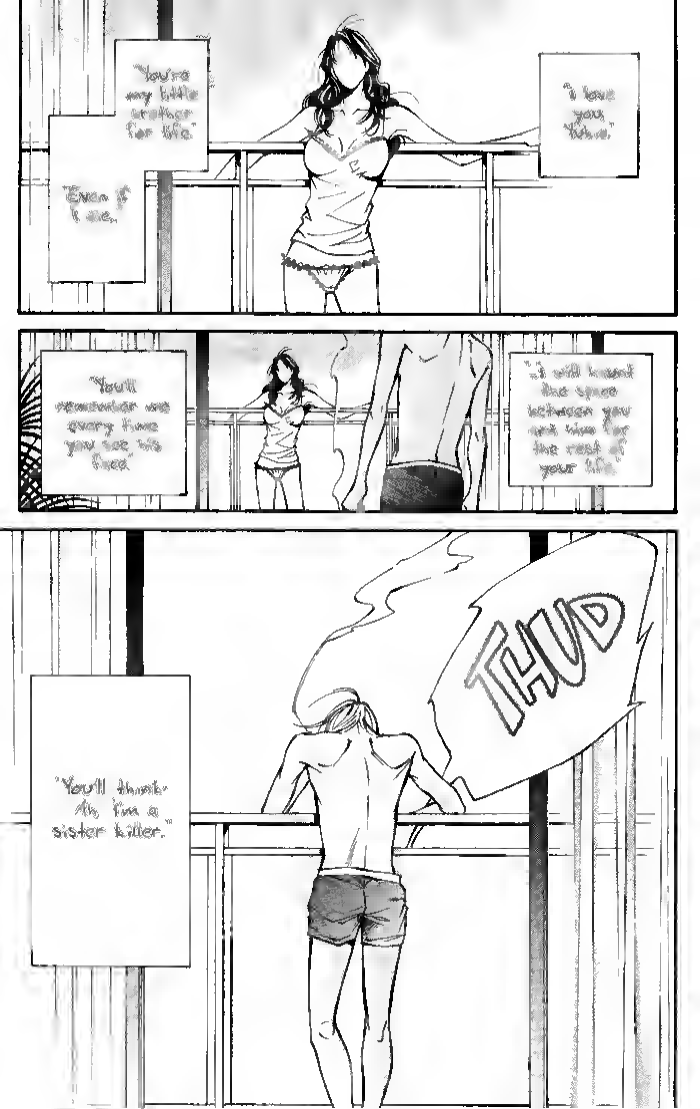
When they started having sex, I wrote gay pornography as if I'd gone mad.



The pretty pornography of two men, beautiful and pure.

that woman
knows
I felt you,
shut
"Yuka, I want kang you ever to Kaoru"

"It's useless."
That's right...
"What?"
There's no reason why I should die.
"You must fantasize about it every night."
"You're thinking I should just die or something for you."
That woman should die.
I should give that back a slight push...
"Even if you kill me, it's useless."
"I should punish you for fantasizing like that, Yukio."
—and send her falling headfirst from that balcony


"You're my little stalker for life."
"Even if I die."
"I love you, Yuki."
"You'll remember me every time you see his head."
"I will haunt the space between you and him for the rest of your life."
"You'll think, Ah, I'm a sister killer."
THUD

"Le tombeau de Couperin" is a tribute to my sister's death,
and "Four Last Songs" serves as my sister's farewell note.
I CHANGED THE LAST SONG. CAN YOU HEAR IT?
IT'S "TRANS-FIGURED NIGHT."
DID YOU MEAN TO COMPLETELY BURY HER WITH "REQUIEM"?
"I WAS LOST IN DESPAIR AND BRED, CONCEIVING A CHILD WITH A STRANGER."
A WOMAN SAYS

THE MAN OF "TRANSFIGURED NIGHT" LOVED THE WOMAN, HER SINS AND ALL.
"THE CHILD WITHIN YOU CAN BE RAISED AS MY OWN."
THE MAN FORGIVES HER BECAUSE HE LOVES HER.
THAT SOME OUTRAGEOUS SIN HAD BEEN COMMITTED AGAINST YOUR SISTER
IF YOU THOUGHT
IF YOU THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO KILLED YOUR SISTER—
FOR INSTANCE,
I'D LOVE YOU
YOUR SINS AND ALL.

SO,
IF LOOKING AT ME REMINDS YOU OF YOUR SISTER
THINK OF STAYING WITH ME AS A PUNISHMENT TO ATONE FOR YOUR SINS.
...IN EXCHANGE, I WILL GIVE YOU LOVE.
IT WILL PROBABLY BE PAINFUL, BUT...
ANIKI... PLEASE STOP.
AS IF YOU COULD PART FROM ME...
OR PERHAPS, COULD IT BE THAT YOU INTEND TO PUNISH ME?
YOU'D PREFER MY REPENTANCE OVER YOUR SISTER'S?

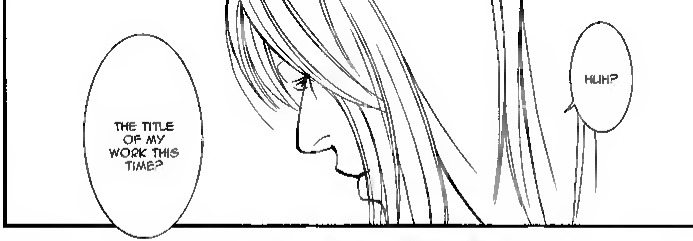
WHY...?
BECAUSE I MARRIED YOUR SISTER...
...WHEN I WAS INTERESTED IN YOU?
OR IS IT BECAUSE I FANTASIZED ABOUT YOUR INDECENT BODY,
WHILE I MADE YOUR SISTER MOAN?
ON TOP OF WHICH, I NEVER LAID A SINGLE FINGER ON YOU.
IS IT BECAUSE LONG AGO, AND EVEN NOW...
I FEEL A KIND OF ECSTASY IN SEEING YOU SUFFER PAIN?
DO YOU INTEND TO PUNISH...
...MY BAD HABIT?

...FORGIVE ME
DON'T SAY THAT YOU'RE LEAVING
I WON'T SO
I'VE STOPPED ENJOYING THE VIEW AND I'M TOUCHING YOU, AREN'T I?
I WON'T DO IT ANYMORE
I WON'T DO IT ANYMORE. I'LL NEVER ENJOY MAKING YOU SUFFER AGAIN
BESIDES, THAT WOMAN IS NO LONGER HERE
It's a lie.
She is here. I can see her every time I look in your face.
REALLY, YUKIO
REALLY...?

My guilt and my sister's face.
As long as I keep loving you, I'll be in pain
But as long as I keep feeling pain
IF YOU WANT ME TO LOVE YOU
SHOW ME YOUR PORN KAORU
YOU'LL LOVE ME, WON'T YOU?
I CAN'T LOVE ANYONE BUT YOU ANYMORE, YUKIO.
That's right...
...you'll probably love me for the rest of your life.

I listened to Schoenberg's "Transfigured Night" every time I wanted to die.

WERE YOU WORRIED ABOUT ME, KAORU?
HA HA
ME...?
I JUST GOT HOME.
YEAH.
YEAH...
YEAH..
I WAS PRAISED THIS TIME. THEY SAID, "IT'S A SUCCESS!"
THE MEETING WENT WELL.
YEAH
AHAHA!
THEN I'LL BE WAITING WITH AN EMPTY STOMACH



Though even now, he's never made an attempt to read it.

Sounds of a worthless voice
Incessantly come to me
Speaking and telling me
That I absolutely must
Eliminate all of the
Revoltingly unsightly things
Knotted and distorted
In fantasy that day
Like so many
Lumps of an
Revolting pile of
Refuse

Saya

"TRANSFIGURED NIGHT"

Transfigured Night/END

WHAT TIME IS IT?
THEY REALLY PUSHED THE DRINKING
OW
UGH
SHIT I FELL ASLEEP
I HAVE TO HURRY UP AND GET BACK
TUK
NATSU-KUN IS PROBABLY ALREADY HOME
STAFF

Natsu-kun is a second year college student.
About half a year ago, he ended up settling in my room.
I'M HOME HIISU-KUN SORRY I'M LATE
Sigh...
Click
SO YOU WERE IN THE BATHROOM HIISU-KUN
I PANICKED BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T HERE
Home

SAY "WELCOME BACK!"
This striking beauty is my younger brother.
ヘタリア!

WELCOME BACK
WELCOME BACK TO YOU TOO HIISH-KUN
YOU JUST GOT HOME RIGHT?
YOU'RE STILL WEARING YOUR SUIT

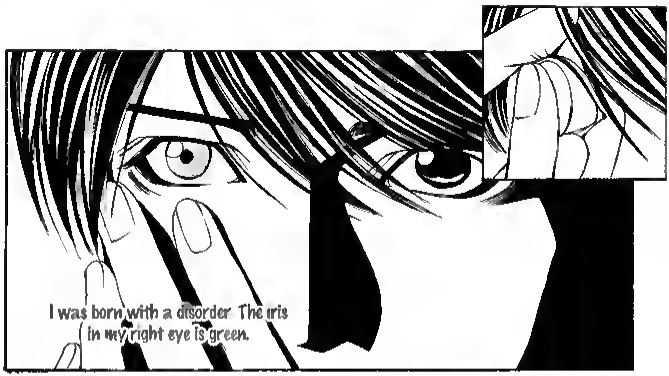
Natsu-kun..
HMM?
THAT'S TOO FORMAL!
YOU SHOULD CALL ME "ANIKI." NOT "HIISH-KUN."
WHY WON'T YOU ACCEPT IT?
I CAN'T
YOU AREN'T MY REAL BROTHER. HIISH-KUN

I KNOW I LOOKED IT UP
YOU MAY HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY MY FAMILY
BUT YOU'RE NOT IN OUR REGISTER, YOU KNOW?
YOU LOOKED-
YEAH
WHY WOULD YOU DO SUCH A-
YOU'RE LOOKING PALE HIISU-KUN
I'LL LAY OUT YOUR FUTON
Natsu-kun refuses to see me as his aniki
He puts me on the spot when he looks at me with those eyes.
UGH
UGH— HE'S SMILING
UGH
It's no good.
Don't take him seriously, Hiisu!

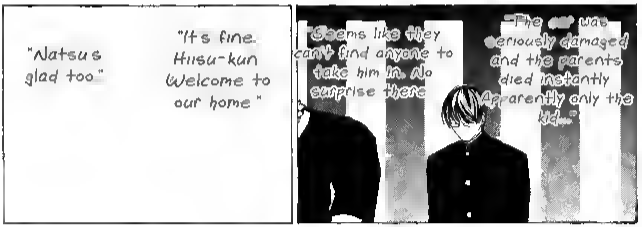
I'm deeply troubled.
Tonight, I'm faltering yet again.
NATSU-KUN. WE AGREED THAT THE LAST TRAIN WAS YOUR CURFEW
I act like his brother with all my might
YEAH...
I'M SORRY... THEY WOULDN'T LET ME LEAVE
But he's very attractive.
THEY TOOK ME EVERYWHERE AND MADE ME DRINK A LOT—
NATSU-KUN...
YOU HAVE LIPSTICK ON YOUR SHIRT
I WAS INTRODUCED TO SOME INTERESTING PEOPLE
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CALLED OUT
BUT IT SEEMS THEY'VE REALLY TAKEN A LIKING TO ME
AH...

WHAT A PAIN TO CLEAN
THEY SAY THAT WOMEN SHAPE
BUT...
...I HAVE SOMEONE I LIKE, SO I
REJEC-
HIISU-KUN?!
I flee with all my might.
"ANIKI"..
When those eyes look at me, I cower.
REMEMBER THAT YOUR CURFEW IS THE LAST TRAIN
ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT ME?

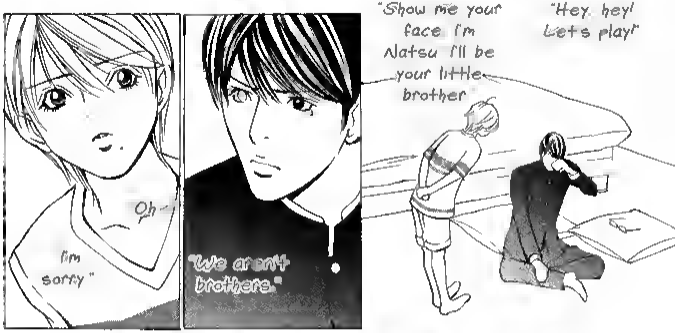
AT LEAST TAKE OUT YOUR COLOR CONTACT...
HIISU-KUN
YOU'VE BEEN RETURNING LATE RECENTLY HIISU-KUN
I KNOW
click
WHY WERE YOU LATE EVEN YESTERDAY?
HIISU-KUN!
SHUT
YESTER-DAY TOO!
POUR
WHEN YOU'RE IN FRONT OF ME

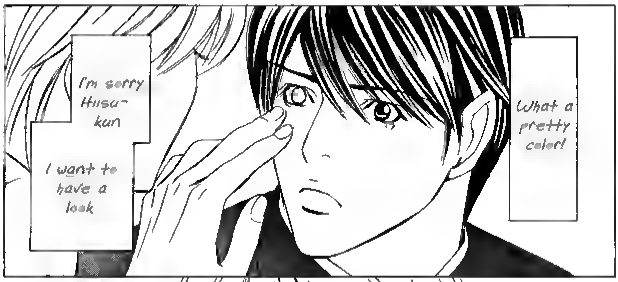

I was born with a disorder. The iris in my right eye is green.

"Look! The father of that place is-
Shhh!
Is it not him? What a creepy kid...


"Natsu is glad too."
"It's fine. Hiisu-kun Welcome to our home."
Seems like they can't find anyone to take him in. No surprise there.
The [illegible] was seriously damaged and the parents died instantly. Apparently only the kid...

"Look over here. Natsu-kun will be your little brother.
Hiisu-kun
Hiisu-kun


Oh~
I'm sorry"
"We aren't brothers."
"Show me your face. I'm Natsu. I'll be your little brother"
"Hey, hey! Let's play!"


I'm sorry Hisu-kun
I want to have a look
What a pretty color!

No matter what you'll let me see it right?
I want to see it every day

OZUKA!
AH- YES!
WERE YOU LISTENING?
I'M FINE
REALLY?
YOU SOMEHOW SEEM FRAIL LATELY OZUKA-KUN
THE COLOR IN YOUR FACE SEEMS OFF ARE YOU OKAY?
SUZUKI-SAN FROM WAKOU
FROM G OO WITH MOROZUMI-
YESTERDAY TOO HE VOMITED AFTER ONE GLASS OF BEER AND WENT HOME RIGHT AWAY
THESE LAST FEW DAYS, YEAH
HE'S STRANGE THAT OZUKA
THAT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME
WAS HE DUMPED BY A WOMAN?
YOU, okay?
Oh, I'm sorry
TODAY TOO HE'S BEEN STUMBLING AROUND SINCE THIS MORNING

A WOMAN IN ACCOUNTING SAID...
...HE WOULDN'T INVITE HER TO BED!
WHAT? REALLY?
BUT HE'S ALWAYS DUMPED PRETTY QUICKLY
BECAUSE HE'S GOOD-LOOKING HE HAS NO PROBLEM ATTRACTING WOMEN
DON'T SAY IT! IT'S TOO PITIFUL...
A VIRGIN...?
UGH
CRUSH
CRUSH
YOU OKAY?
PLEASE EXCUSE ME A MOMENT

Boop!
Fade
AH A TOOTH BROKE
UESH-
Clink!
IT HURTS IT HURTS THIS IS BAD
IT HURTS...
STOP! STOP IT, NOBU-KUN!
HEY... YOU OKAY NATSU?
Gasp
NATSU-KUN
WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING TO YOU?
THIS IS REALLY BAD
Gasp

HIS TOOTH SNAPPED, DIDN'T IT?
THAT JUST MADE AN AWFUL SOUND...
MY BAD NATSU
LIKE I SAID, DON'T JUST ANNOUNCE THAT YOU'RE LEAVING!
I MIGHT ACCIDENTALLY HIT YOU
HM...?
SOMETHING WRONG?
WELL, THAT IS...
YEAH
THEN JUST HALF AN HOUR

Wasn't his face smashed against the edge of the desk?!
Didn't blood come out?!
THERE ISN'T A MARK ON HIS FACE!
I THOUGHT YOUR TOOTH SNAPPED
HUH? WHY?
EVEN THOUGH NORU-KUN SERIOUSLY SMASHED HIM ONE...
WHAT THE HELL...?
ARE YOU SURE YOU PUT IT IN?
I PUT IT IN...
IF IT WERE ME, IT'D BE ENOUGH FOR AN OVERDOSE!
THE DRUGS AREN'T WORKING EITHER
AN ILLUSION?
SUPER-HUMAN HEALING POWERS?
IF ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND VIOLENCE AREN'T ENOUGH
AYUMI, YOU SHOULD INVITE HIM TO BED AFTER ALL. DON'T LEAVE IT TO CHANCE
JUST GET INTO IT A LITTLE AND TAKE SOME PICTURES...
Aha ha ha
THAT'S RIGHT
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SUGGESTED THAT WE HOOK HIM AND BLACKMAIL HIM, AYUMI!

HURRY HOME...
NATSU-KUN
IT'S NO USE...
hua
hua
hua
THE DRUG'S TOO STRONG
BUT...
SINCE HE SUDDENLY LET DOWN HIS GUARD
THANKS FOR THE TREAT ♡
smile
THEN, I'M OFF
I'M SORRY HIISU-KUN I BROKE MY CURFEW AGAIN
I ended up passed out in an alley again. By the time I made it home, it was two in the morning.

WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS LATE?
Sorry, so...
I'm worn to bits.
IT'S NOT "HIISU-KUN" IT'S "ANKI"
No good... I'm exhausted..
BUT YOU WERE EVEN LATER THAN I WAS, HIISU-KUN
....sleepy....
Hya!
I'VE BEEN LATE THE PAST TWO DAYS...
BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN LATE RECENTLY TOO
I THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW...
JUST WHAT KIND OF FEELINGS I'D BEEN WAITING WITH

WELL, IT'S FINE. HEY, HIISU-KUN
NATSU-KUN, DON'T CLING TO ME LIKE THAT
WHY NOT?
TAKE OUT YOUR CONTACT
SHOW ME YOUR ODD-EYE
IS THIS KIND OF THING SO STRANGE?
I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? WE'RE BROTHERS! WE CAN DO THESE KINDS OF THINGS!
WHAT?
HA HA WHAT'S THAT ABOUT?
YOU REJECTED ME WHEN I WAS EIGHT AND SAID THAT WE WEREN'T BROTHERS, BUT...
YOU NEVER SAID WE COULDN'T
YOU SAID WE WOULD...

When I was 19, he was still a middle school student
He sought me out and I was afraid
WHEN I BECAME AN ADULT
I said it.
I definitely said it
I gave him an excuse because I was truly afraid.
"When you become an adult, Natsu-kun we will We definitely will so-
Without an ounce of brotherly pretence...
How can I get you to agree?!
"When you become an adult

I TURNED TWENTY
SINCE YOU DIDN'T COME HOME HIISU-KUN
I WAS ALONE
THE DAY BEFORE YESTER-DAY
I BECAME AN ADULT
I'M AN ADULT
Have you always known my feelings?
HIISU-KUN ARE YOU LATE
BECAUSE I'VE BECOME AN ADULT?
I have.
EVEN THOUGH I'VE BECOME AN ADULT
YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING

The day before yesterday...
The number that you have dialed is

Have you cut me off, Hiisu-kun?
It hurts...
LET'S SPREAD THE PICTURES!
IT'S NOT "I WAS SEDUCED BY HER"
IT'S "I RAPED HER," RIGHT?
SIGH
THIS GUY FORCED YOU, RIGHT?
RIGHT, MOE?
YEAH
I GUESS YOU COULD JUST HAND OVER SOME MONEY...
HUH? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
VIOLENCE SEEMS TO WORK TODAY
YEAH, AND MOE PRACTIALLY LED HIM BY THE NOSE...
FOR NOW, HOW ABOUT YOU HEAD OVER TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE AND WITHDRAW SOME CASH?
Hiisu-kun, you idiot...
THE BADGER GAME, RIGHT? I'VE KNOWN ALL ALONG
DON'T TALK RUBBISH, RAPIST!
JUST HAND OVER THE MONEY!
Hiisu-kun, are you worried?
Are you picturing me in your mind?

It seems like I am. Every day, every minute, every second..
It'd be great
If you were thinking of me too
click
YOU'D GO THAT FAR?
THAT'S PRETTY CRUEL.
?
DON'T BE UNFAITHFUL, NATSU.
WHAT'S WITH THAT GUY?
NATSU'S WOUNDS —!
NO-
NOSU-KUN
YEAH..
HIISU-KUN..!

YOU SEE
HIISU-KUN IS A LYCANTHROPE
IN OTHER WORDS HE'S A WEREWOLF
WHO IS THIS GUY?
Uwah!
NATSU'S WOUNDS ARE TRANSFERRING TO THAT OLD GUY OVER THERE...
THINK IT'S A LIE?
IN THAT CASE, TAKE A LOOK
THE COLOR OF HIISU-KUN'S EYE...
JUST THE ONE SIDE IS THE COLOR OF A WOLF'S, RIGHT?
SEE?

IF YOU DON'T HURRY UP AND RUN AWAY, SOMETHING BAD IS GONNA HAPPEN
HUH? AM I WRONG?
HaHa!
WHAT AN IDIOT
LWAH!
WHAT IS THIS?

NATSU-KUN, I'M NOT A WEREWOLF
WHAT I HAVE IS AN "INUGAMI"

REMEMBER IT PROPERLY MY FAMILY IS "INUGAMI-MOCHI" IT'S A CURSED SPIRIT
THAT'S WHY NO ONE WOULD TAKE ME IN
YES
IT'S TAROO
REALLY?
HUH?
WHAT?
IT'S TAROO T-A-R-O-O!
THAT'S WHY EVEN YOUR FAMILY REGISTER
HUH?
WHAT?
ONE MORE TIME HIISU-KUN

I KISSED YOU THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY...

YEAH
THERE'S SUCH A FIERCE THING HAUNTING YOU HIISU-KUN
ARE YOU OKAY?
THOUGH YOUR KISS WAS SO GENTLE...
The badger game ran away
Eeeek!
HUH?!
Hee Hee
YOU WERE AWAKE?!
YEP I WAS AWAKE
I ALSO KNEW ABOUT THE "INUGAMI-MOCHI" CAUSE I LOOKED IT UP
You looked it up?!
Don't tell me... In high school?!
IS IT OKAY IF I CLING TO YOU?
What are you saying? How much do you know?!

IF YOU GET INVOLVED WITH ME, YOU'LL BE CURSED FOR LIFE, YOU KNOW?
YEAH
YOU CAN
YOU CAN BUT
rrrumb
IT'LL CURSE YOUR DESCENDANTS FOREVER!
NOT JUST FOR LIFE THOUGH
YEAH
YOU SAW THAT TERRIBLE THING JUST NOW, RIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN, REALLY—
YEAH
YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT?
rrrumb
slide

See?
I'm faltering tonight too
KISS
KISS
HEY...
DO IT...

He sees through everything.
I'm sure he always knew
that I'd just used it as an excuse...
...and that I really was just scared
Nhm...
Hiugu ku...

I think I mis-judged you.
ISN'T IT NORMAL?
Is it ?
I didn't expect you...
...to be so skilled Hasu-kun
Such a skillful kiss
Your caresses too..
Nhn..
PROBA-BLY
Ah!
-for a salaryman?
Is this normal ...

I'll be on top
strain
strain
strain
Dont
Itll hurt
No way
SAY "OKAY"
I want you to take off your glasses
BUT I WANT TO SEE YOUR FACE WHEN YOU COME
Ah!
Ah! Ah!
No
Hiisu-kun, no!
SORRY...
I WAS WRONG
LET'S GO SLOWLY
I THOUGHT YOU WERE FINE....

HIISU-KUN, YOU IDIOT.
IT WAS REALLY GOOD...
HUH?
REALLY?!
turn
AS PUNISHMENT, YOU CAN'T DO IT WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN ME FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE
YOU CAN'T LOOK AT ANYONE LIKE THIS
WEARING YOUR GLASSES
I'D ALWAYS SELFISHLY THOUGHT THAT YOU'D NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE, HIISU-KUN.
I'M GLAD THAT YOU'RE SKILLED
BUT I'M A LITTLE SHOCKED
...AND SHOWING YOUR ODD-EYE IS ALSO NO GOOD

YOU'RE COOL HIISU-KUN AND YOU'RE SKILLED I'M REALLY WORRIED
I'M SORRY
It was a bigger shock than the inugami.
KISS ME HIISU-KUN
I'M SORRY
DON'T DO IT OKAY?
I WON'T
DON'T SHOW IT OKAY?
I WON'T

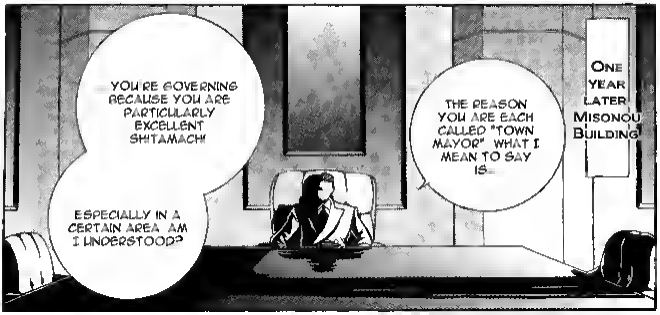
AGAIN?
I WON'T BE WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN YOU FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE NATSU-KUN
REALLY?!
REALLY?
I WON'T EITHER
I'LL NEVER BE WITH ANOTHER MAN AGAIN
I faltered after all
A miserable office worker/END

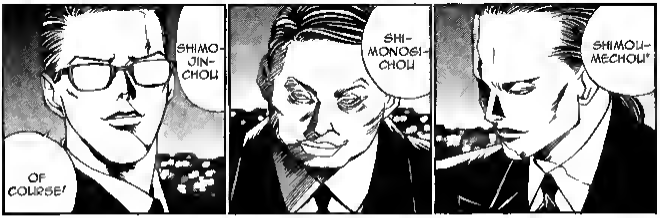
DON'T TELL ME HE SLIPPED INTO SHITAMACHI!
AMEYA? NO WAY
NO GOOD
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
WAS HE THERE?
NO. NOT THERE
AMEYA IS A FIRST CLASS ASSASSIN
WHY WOULD HE BE REDUCED TO A RUNAWAY?
WELL, THAT'S WHAT THE PROBLEM IS. IF HE MANAGES TO GET TO SHITAMACHI, FAR FROM BEING AN ASSASSIN, HE'LL BE "JUST A RUNAWAY"

Assassin Drop コロシヤドロップ

In the metropolitan area, like a gaping trap, Shitamachi is dotted with countless customers waiting to squander their money.
SHITAMACHI IS A LAWLESS AREA WHICH ENDLESSLY SWALLOWS UP PEOPLE
Yoap
EVEN WE WON'T BE ABLE TO INTERFERE RECKLESSLY, LET ALONE THE POLICE.
IT'S A NEST OF SKIPPERS*

As the neon lights overhead flash showily, Shitamachi casts deep shadows.
Skippers are swallowed into a hole as black as the gaping mouth on an astonished face.
コロシヤドロップ
Assassin Drop


YOU'RE GOVERNING BECAUSE YOU ARE PARTICULARLY EXCELLENT SHITAMACHI
ESPECIALLY IN A CERTAIN AREA AM I UNDERSTOOD?
THE REASON YOU ARE EACH CALLED "TOWN MAYOR" WHAT I MEAN TO SAY IS...
ONE YEAR LATER MISONOU BUILDING


SHIMO-JIN-CHOU
OF COURSE!
SHI-MONOSI-CHOU
SHIMOU-MECHOU!

...PROFESSIONAL KILLERS. AM I RIGHT, PRESIDENT MISONOU?
THE PERSONAL DISPATCHMENT OF...

A CERTAIN CONTRACTOR HAS A TREASURER WITH TIGHT DRAW-STRINGS ON HIS PURSE.
IT IS AN EXCESSIVE EYESORE
CORRECT.

THE TREASURER BROUGHT HIS BED INTO HIS COMPANY'S AAA SECURITY BUILDING
I REALLY HAVE TO TAKE MY HAT OFF TO HIM
HOWEVER
IF THE TREASURER SHOULD DISAPPEAR WE COULD TAKE MONEY FROM THE CONTRACTOR LIKE WATER

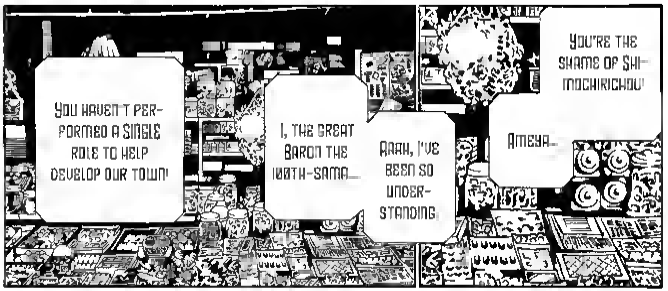
WAIT JUST A MOMENT, YOUR EXCELLENCY!
I WANT TO DISPATCH A SINGLE ASSASSIN FROM AMONG YOUR TOWNS GENTLMEN

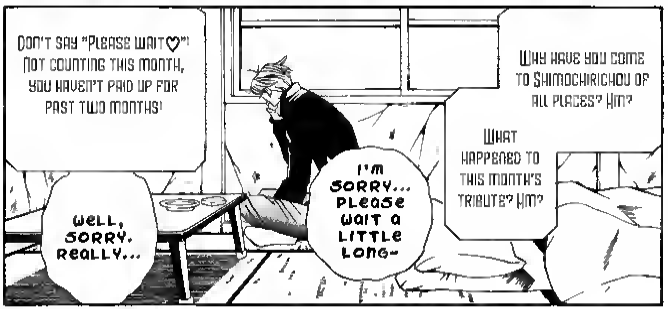
IF IT'S FOR YOUR EXCELLENCY'S SAKE I RAPON THE 100TH
... WILL STRIP 97 SKINS!
THAT ROLE IS DEFINITELY IN SHIMOCHIRI-CHOU, WHICH I GOVERN!
WHY DID YOU NOT CALL ME, BARON THE 100TH, NM?!
DON'T PLAY COY AND HOLD BACK!

However, I, Saron the 100th, have grown weary of my holiday.
Pork
HA, HA...
That your excellency doesn't give us work is to give respite to our town's veterans!
Sissy
Nay!
People call Shimochirichou Shitamachi's eminent sissy set but, ah...
Sissy Town
Sissy Baron
Saburou Ameya was there.
(Sissy) Shimochirichou, huh?
I see. I've been forgetting someone.
President. In that case, the matter this time...
Will it be Saburou Ameya?
He hasn't killed a flea since he came. He's the yellow-bellied larva of useless fleas
Ameya?
Pfft
That's no good.

HERE TOO.
IT'S FRUITLESS FOR US TO COMPETE WITH AMEYA.
IN THAT CASE, ALLOW US TO WITHDRAW.
chunk
YES...
IT IS AMEYA.
THERE'S NO WAY IT CAN BE DONE
BY A GUY WITH THE SOCIAL STANDING OF AN EX-ASSASSIN WHO SPOUTS THINGS LIKE "I HATE KILLING-"!!
HEY, HEY, HEY!
WHY ARE YOU WITHDRAWING?! YOU WANT SHI-MOCHIRICHOU TO BE CALLED A SISSY SET AGAIN?!
NO...IT'S AMEYA
YOUR EXCELLENCY, MISONOU! IT WON'T WORK WITH THAT GUY!
WE HAVE MANY MORE SKILFUL ONES TO BOAST OF

GOT THAT BARON?
AMEYA WILL DO
GET AMEYA TO DO IT


YOU HAVEN'T PERFORMED A SINGLE ROLE TO HELP DEVELOP OUR TOWN!
I, THE GREAT BARON THE 100TH-SAMA...
AHAH, I'VE BEEN SO UNDERSTANDING.
YOU'RE THE SHAME OF SHIMOCHIRICHOU!
AMEYA...


DON'T SAY "PLEASE WAIT♡"! NOT COUNTING THIS MONTH, YOU HAVEN'T PAID UP FOR PAST TWO MONTHS!
WELL, SORRY. REALLY...
I'M SORRY... PLEASE WAIT A LITTLE LONG-
WHY HAVE YOU COME TO SHIMOCHIRICHOU OF ALL PLACES? HM?
WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS MONTH'S TRIBUTE? HM?

Ameya, how old are you?
uh... what?
We a whoole three year old?
no- um-
If you're a big grown up, instead of having a small-time candy shop
that won't sell anything, steal and extort or make something happen!
no, you see-
It's not "No ♡, you see ♡"! I am not obligated to protect skippers who can't pay!
sorry...
It's "I'm terribly sorry"!
I- I'm terribly sorry...
Then, let's do it this way, Ameya. It seems His Benevolent Excellency, Misondu, has a job for you.
If that job ends up a success, we'll let you off on your debt so far
a job...
It's killing. ♡
I refuse!
Beep

Translator's Notes:

Note on names:

"*Shitamachi*" means "lower town"

"*Ameya*" means "Candy Shop"

"*Saburo*" is the name of a third son, basically meaning "third son"

Page 02

The furigana defines "skipper" as "runaway"

Page 04

These three names have the kanji normally used for "Shitamachi" as "Shimo" and "chou." It seems they are divisions of the larger "Shitamachi"

Page 12.

Kanji specifies "middle school girls" for "Chu-bohs" (Chu-boh is a magazine aimed at middle school girls) and "elementary schoolers" for "brats")

Page 13

"Umaibo" = "tasty stick" looked it up, but it seems people just call it by the Japanese name

As always, QP = He means "thanks" but doesn't actually say it.

Page 14

"Poser" here is like "hypocrite" but pretending to be bad, rather than pretending to be good like the first one is

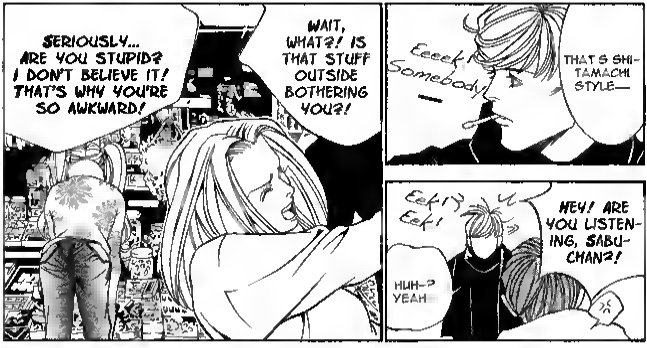
Page 27

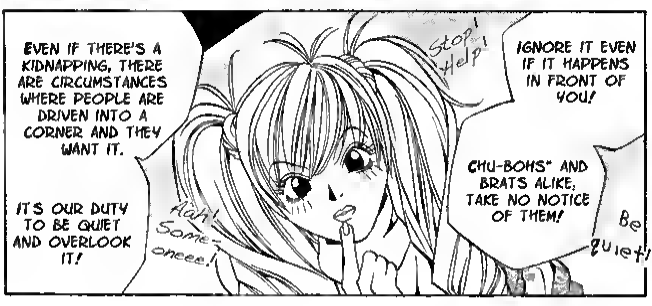
The non-furigana reading for "analog" is "body guard"

Oh, my~ Sabu-chan. You feeling down again?
Oh...
.....
AT ANY RATE, THEY'RE COMMODITIES WITH NO TARGET TO GO TO. EVEN IF THEY'RE STOLEN, IS LONG AS THEY'RE EATEN, I'LL BE HAPPY...
DID YOU NEED ME FOR SOMETHING, KAJII?
IT'S FINE.
Duck
Wah~ This room is cold!
WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE THE SHOP?
EVEN A CANDY SHOP WITH NO CUSTOMERS IS DANGEROUS
DON'T CALL ME BY MY NAME FROM ABOVE
BUNTA
I'M RUPIKO! BUNTA IS DEAD! IT'S RUPIKO NOW!

TAKE IT THIS TIME
I THINK IT'S ENOUGH FOR THIS MONTH'S TRIBUTE
HERE'S MY LOVE
I CAME BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT'D BE ABOUT TIME YOU RAN OUT OF MONEY
I SEE. MY DAD
SINCE IT'S THE END OF THE MONTH
BUY SOME CLOTHES YOU LIKE OR SOMETHING
I WON'T DEMAND YOUR BODY OR ANYTHING THIS TIME
TAKE IT! IT'S FINE
NO I'M FINE
YOU CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OTHER PEOPLE'S THINGS AND YOUR OWN IN SHITAMACHI WHERE THIEVES GATHER
I WHO WENT THROUGH THE TROUBLE TO GIVE YOU MONEY AM ALSO STRANGE BUT-
HAH!
WEIRDO!
Eeeek! Heeeelp!
HOW CAN YOU REFUSE IT, YOU IMPOTENT?!
PLEASE TAKE THINGS SERIOUSLY AND LEARN THE SHITAMACHI STYLE!

ROBBERY ABDUCTION SLAVE TRADE IT'S A LAWLESS DISTRICT WHERE ANYTHING GOES
Welcome to
SHIMOCHIRCHOU
SEEN FROM OUTSIDE, SHI-TAMACHI IS THE DREAM PLEASURE DISTRICT
BUT WHEN YOU COME INSIDE IT'S VASTLY DIF-FERENT
IT'S THE KIND OF PLACE FOR PEOPLE WHO'D SELL THEIR OWN DAUGHTER OR INTERNAL ORGANS FOR A BIT OF CASH
Yeeeek!
Eeeeeek
BUYER
ZUMIY
STA
FRO
LOVE

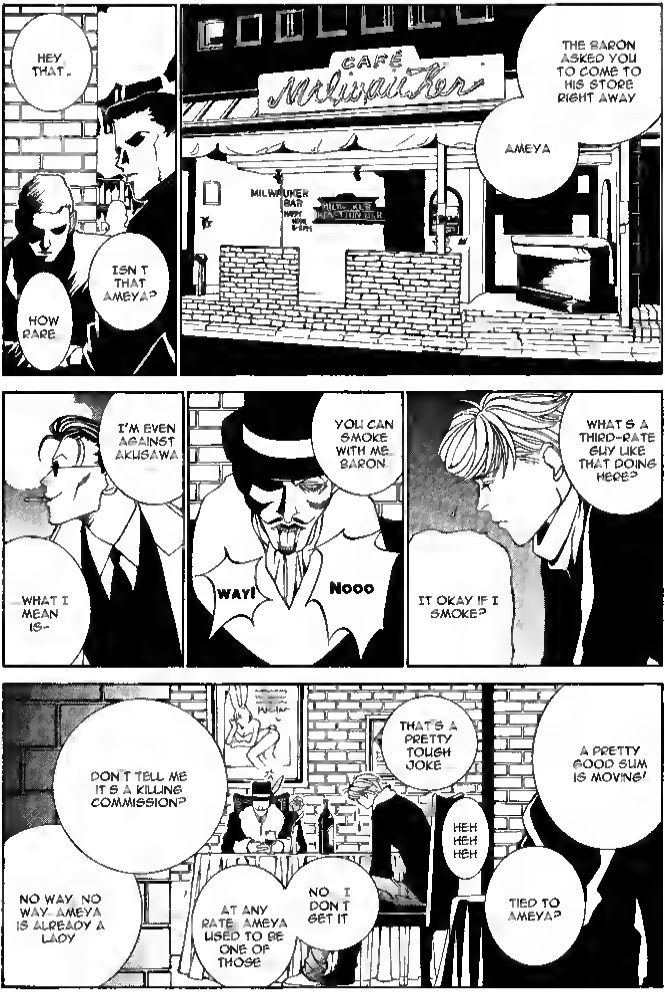

SERIOUSLY... ARE YOU STUPID? I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THAT'S WHY YOU'RE SO AWKWARD!
WAIT, WHAT?! IS THAT STUFF OUTSIDE BOTHERING YOU?!
Eeeek! Somebody!
THAT'S SHI-TAMACHI STYLE—
Eek!? Eek!
HUH-? YEAH
HEY! ARE YOU LISTEN-ING, SABU-CHAN?!


EVEN IF THERE'S A KIDNAPPING, THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE PEOPLE ARE DRIVEN INTO A CORNER AND THEY WANT IT.
IT'S OUR DUTY TO BE QUIET AND OVERLOOK IT!
Kyah! Some-oneee!
Stop! Help!
IGNORE IT EVEN IF IT HAPPENS IN FRONT OF YOU!
CHU-BOHS" AND BRATS ALIKE, TAKE NO NOTICE OF THEM!
Be quiet!

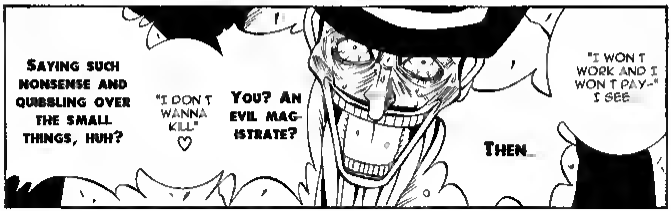
SABU-CHAN I TOOK AN UMAIBO* LEFT THE MONEY IN THE BOX
AS ALWAYS QP*
SO RUNTA WAS THE ONE MAKING ALL THE NOISE, HUH?
Cute...
Stoooop!
Glance
UNDER-STAND?!
Sabu-chaan!
Eeeek! Nooo!
HEY, SABU! YOU COWARD!
Noooo! Help! Someoneeeee!
Freaky Friday?
SABU-CHAN BELONGS TO QP!
CROSS DRESSERS ARE THE ONES WHO SHOULD GO HOME
Twitch
I'M HAVING A GROWN-UP TALK WITH SABU-CHAN.
BRATS SHOULD GO HOME, MISS RUNAWAY.
Heelp! Nooo!
HE WANTS TO SAVE THAT GIRL OR SOMETHING~ SO STRANGE~
NO WAY, QP! LISTEN UP! IT SEEMS HE'S THINKING
OH, NO...
I MEAN... AH! COULD IT BE YOUR USUAL SICKNESS?!
NO WAY! SABU-CHAN! WHY ARE YOU STILL RESTLESS WHEN QP HAS COME?!
SERIOUSLY?! I MEAN, HOW TACKY!~
Someoneee!
Eeeek!

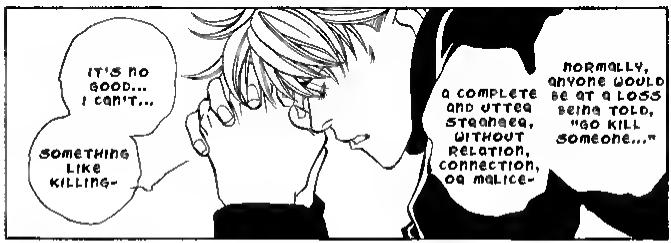
Boom! Boom!!
Slam
Seeeeeeeh
I'M NOT WORRIED--!
HEY! I'M REALLY NOT!
VRRRRRRRRRRROOOOOM
THEY LEFT...
OH MY... HOW RAD
WHAT A HYPOCRITE OR RATHER, A POSER
"I'M NOT WORRIED♡" REALLY
THOUGH IF YOU WERE THAT WORRIED YOU SHOULD HAVE SAVED HER.
COWARD.

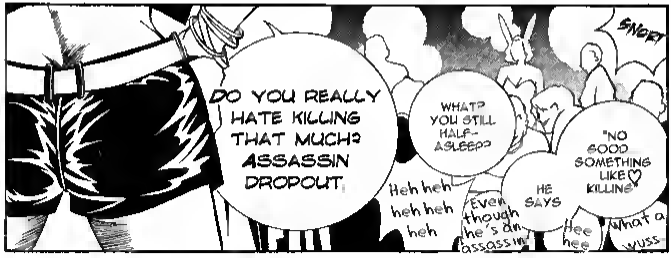
JUST NOW OVER THERE, A WOMAN WAS TAKEN AWAY, RIGHT?
THAT WAS MOMOE-CHAN THE BEAUTY OF SHIMO-CHIRI!
WELL, WELL~ EVERYONE'S TOGETHER!
IT IS I, AKUSAWA-CHAN, SHIMO-CHIRICHOU'S TRAFFICKER OF INFORMATION!
ASK ME ANYTHING!
TOO BEAUTIFUL FOR SHIMOCHIRI-CHOU.
HER SIZES ARE STARTING FROM THE TOP-
I DON'T NEED YOUR IDLE GOSSIP!
YOU'RE GETTING SENILE!
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
YOUR ONLY WORTH IS SNIFFING OUT THE SCENT OF MONEY!
OH~ NO~
I'VE JUST COME AS THE BARON'S ERRAND BOY!
THAT AIN'T IT! I DEFINITELY SENSED THE MOVEMENT OF MONEY!
I MEAN COMING TO SEE UBER-POOR SABU-CHAN AH HA HA HA!


HEY THAT..
ISN'T THAT AMEYA?
HOW RARE
CAFÉ Milwaukee
MILWAUKEE BAR
THE BARON ASKED YOU TO COME TO HIS STORE RIGHT AWAY
AMEYA
I'M EVEN AGAINST AKUSAWA
WHAT I MEAN IS-
YOU CAN SMOKE WITH ME BARON.
WAY!
Nooo
WHAT'S A THIRD-RATE GUY LIKE THAT DOING HERE?
IT OKAY IF I SMOKE?
DON'T TELL ME IT'S A KILLING COMMISSION?
NO WAY. NO WAY. AMEYA IS ALREADY A LADY
AT ANY RATE, AMEYA USED TO BE ONE OF THOSE
NO... I DON'T GET IT
THAT'S A PRETTY TOUGH JOKE
HEH HEH HEH
TIED TO AMEYA?
A PRETTY GOOD SUM IS MOVING!

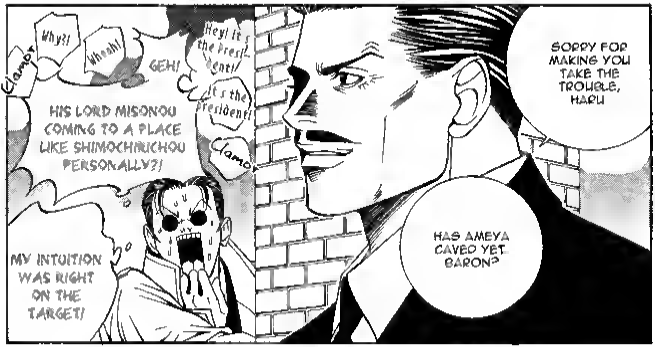
HIS EXCELLENCY SAID THAT FOR YOU, IT'S A JOB YOU COULD DO BEFORE BREAKFAST.
WE CAN GIVE YOU AS MANY WEAPONS AND AS MUCH INFORMATION AS YOU NEED
THAT ISN'T THE PROBL—
THEN IS IT MONEY? AH?
SOR—I'M TERRIBLY SORRY—FOR ME, IT'S VERY—

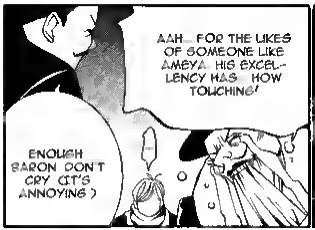

"I WON'T WORK AND I WON'T PAY—" I SEE.
THEN...
YOU? AN EVIL MAGISTRATE?
"I DON'T WANNA KILL" ♡
SAYING SUCH NONSENSE AND QUIBBLING OVER THE SMALL THINGS, HUH?

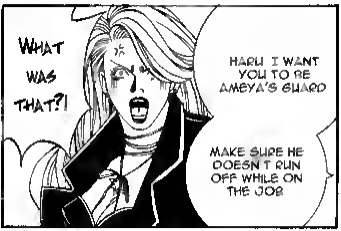

NORMALLY, ANYONE WOULD BE AT A LOSS BEING TOLD, "GO KILL SOMEONE..."
A COMPLETE AND UTTER STRANGER, WITHOUT RELATION, CONNECTION, OR MALICE—
SOMETHING LIKE KILLING—
IT'S NO GOOD... I CAN'T...


SNORT
"NO GOOD SOMETHING LIKE KILLING" ♡
HE SAYS
WHAT A WUSS
HEE HEE
EVEN THOUGH HE'S AN ASSASSIN
HEH HEH HEH HEH
WHAT? YOU STILL HALF-ASLEEP?
DO YOU REALLY HATE KILLING THAT MUCH? ASSASSIN DROPOUT.

AT LEAST SAY THAT YOU'VE GOTTEN TIRED OF KILLING.
BARON
I'LL DO THAT JOB FOR YOU.
THE TALK OF HIM BEING THE BEST IS FROM A MILLION YEARS AGO
IT'S HARU FROM SHIMOJIN-CHOU.
THE ONE WHO FINISHED 300 PEOPLE
THERE ARE MANY RARE GUESTS TODAY.
HARU
HI~ AMEYA YOU'RE JUST AS HYPOCRITICAL AS EVER MAKES ME WANT TO PUKE
WHY IS SOMEONE LIKE YOU FROM SHIMOJINCHOU?
YO!
BIG SIS HARU, YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL AGAIN TODAY.
GOT BUSINESS WITH SHIMOCHIRI-CHOU?
GOT NO BUSINESS WITH YOU, AKUSAWA. I WAS JUST CALLED OUT HERE.
CALLED OUT...?
I'M THE ONE WHO CALLED YOU


Clamp!
Why?!
Whoah!
GEH!
Hey! It's the President!
It's the President!
Clamp!
HIS LORD MISONOU COMING TO A PLACE LIKE SHIMOCHIRUCHOU PERSONALLY?!
MY INTUITION WAS RIGHT ON THE TARGET!
SORRY FOR MAKING YOU TAKE THE TROUBLE, HARU
HAS AMEYA CAVED YET BARON?


AAH... FOR THE LIKES OF SOMEONE LIKE AMEYA, HIS EXCELLENCY HAS... HOW TOUCHING!
ENOUGH BARON DON'T CRY IT'S ANNOYING)

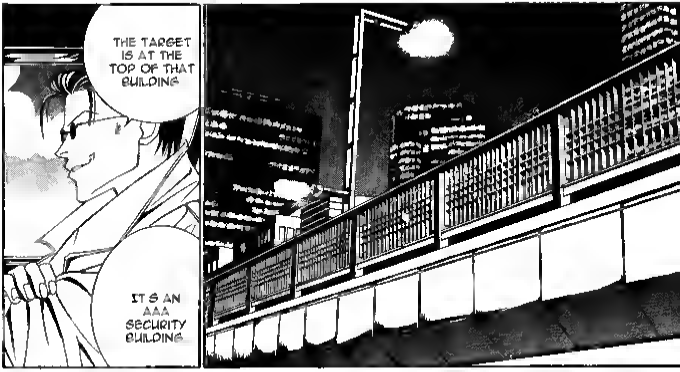

WHAT WAS THAT?!
HARU I WANT YOU TO BE AMEYA'S GUARD
MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T RUN OFF WHILE ON THE JOB

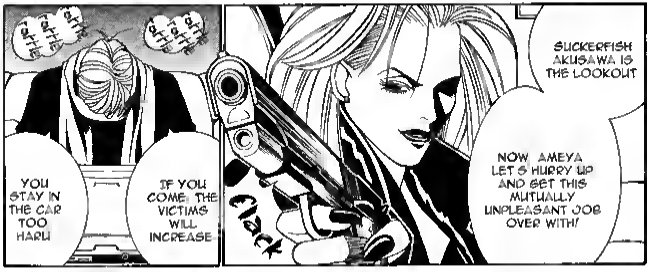
HEY AMEYA
YOU LOOK DIFFERENT THAN BEFORE, HUH?
I'M NOT GONNA DO IT.
DID YOU THINK YOU COULD CHANGE AFTER COMING TO SHITAMACHI? IDIOT
HEY. MISONOU.

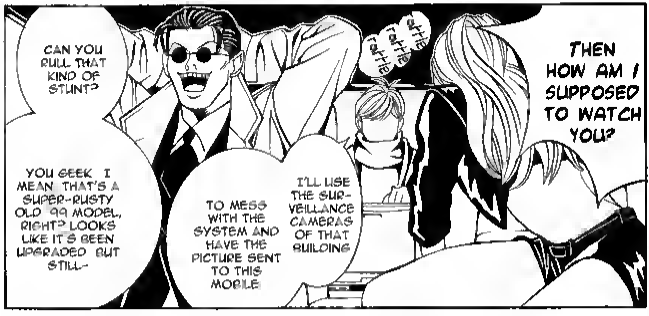
"JUST AN ASSASSIN"
SPEAKING OF CHANGE, YOU USED TO ATTACH "JUST AN" IN FRONT OF "ASSASSIN."
186
AMEYA, HOW TALL ARE YOU?
LEDGER NUMBER 186!
Oh, this guy's feeling down again.
BARON! YOU'VE PREPARED THE LEDGER OF CITIZENS, RIGHT?
SHALL WE BEGIN?
EXTRAORDI-NARY. IT'S ANALOG...
HAH-
22
HARU!
HOW OLD ARE YOU?
YONE TACHIBANA-SAN
AGE 76

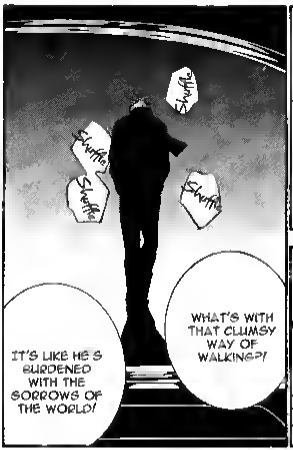
AMEYA, HOW OLD HAVE YOU TURNED?
LEAVE ME ALONE!
YOU PLUGGED YOUR FIGURE TOO MUCH
TOMEKICHI NUMATA-SAN, AGE 88
LEDGER NUMBER 88.
ALL RIGHT.
NUMBER 87, KINUE NUMATA-SAN, AGE 5
THREE YEARS OLD MENTALLY
I'M ONE LOWER
HEY AMEYA
IF YOU REFUSE TO DO THE JOB NO MATTER WHAT,
THESE YONE-SAN, TOME-SAN AND KINU-SAN WILL IMMEDIATELY BE
SHOT TO DEATH.

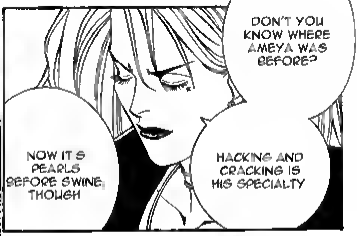
WHO ? THAT S
I DON T KNOW
BUT THANKS TO YOU, THEY'LL DIE
WILL YOU KILL ONE PERSON OR THREE?
WILL YOU KILL SOMEONE WHO HAS A REASON TO BE KILLED OR THOSE WHO DON T?
IT'S YOUR CHOICE
WE'LL COVER THE COST OF THE PREPARA-TIONS, AMEYA
Squeeeeeeeeeze

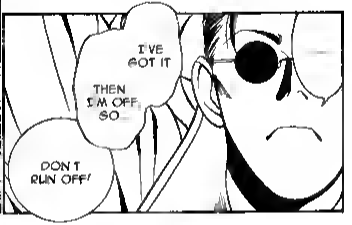

THE TARGET IS AT THE TOP OF THAT BUILDING
IT'S AN AAA SECURITY BUILDING


SUCKERFISH AKUSAWA IS THE LOOKOUT
NOW AMEYA LET'S HURRY UP AND GET THIS MUTUALLY UNPLEASANT JOB OVER WITH!
clack
IF YOU COME, THE VICTIMS WILL INCREASE
YOU STAY IN THE CAR TOO HARU
tat-tat-tat-tat
tat-tat-tat-tat


THEN HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO WATCH YOU?
tat-tat-tat-tat
I'LL USE THE SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS OF THAT BUILDING
TO MESS WITH THE SYSTEM AND HAVE THE PICTURE SENT TO THIS MOBILE
YOU SEEK. I MEAN, THAT'S A SUPER-RUSTY OLD '99 MODEL, RIGHT? LOOKS LIKE IT'S BEEN UPGRADED BUT STILL-
CAN YOU PULL THAT KIND OF STUNT?


Shuffle
Shuffle
Shuffle
Shuffle
IT'S LIKE HE'S BURDENED WITH THE SORROWS OF THE WORLD!
WHAT'S WITH THAT CLUMSY WAY OF WALKING?!


DON'T YOU KNOW WHERE AMEYA WAS BEFORE?
HACKING AND CRACKING IS HIS SPECIALTY
NOW IT'S PEARLS BEFORE SWINE, THOUGH


I'VE GOT IT
THEN I'M OFF, SO...
DON'T RUN OFF!

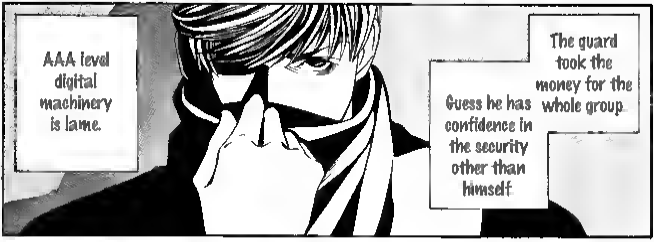
THAT AMEYA WAS IN THE ASSASSINATION CORPS OF A PLACE CALLED SOMETHING-OR-OTHER-SECT
OR THAT ASSASSINATION CORP IS NOTORIOUS FOR THE INCREDIBLE SKILL OF ITS GROUP
BUT SIS... THOSE ARE RUMORS, RIGHT?
AMAZING... IT'S REALLY COMING IN
DON'T SAY SUCH TEDIOUS THINGS!

THE WORLD PROBABLY CHANGED BECAUSE OF HIM.
HE HAD TO ESCAPE IN THE MIDDLE OF A JOB A YEAR AGO
THE OLD AMEYA WAS AMAZING...
...OR IN THAT INCREDIBLY SKILLED GROUP, AMEYA WAS NUMBER ONE...

AMEYA HAS APPEARED
INCREDIGLE! HE'S TALKING WITH THE GUARD AT THE BACK DOOR
THAT'S ANOTHER EXAGGERATION HUH SIS?
OH
SIS, THAT TALK JUST NOW WAS A RUMOR MIXED WITH LIES AFTER ALL.
IT'S MORE LIKELY HE COULDN'T CUT IT INSTEAD OF FORGETTING HOW WHAT A COWARD
I MEAN IF YOU'RE CRACKING THE SYSTEM, IT'S BETTER TO CUT THE CAMERAS RATHER THAN TRANSMIT THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE
TALKING? HAH!
IF IT WAS ME THAT GUARD WOULD ALREADY BE DEAD
LOOK HE JUST MADE HIS WAY AROUND BEHIND
YOU'RE RIGHT HE'S GONE AROUND...
AREN'T THEY PARTING OR SOMETHING?
HE'S STILL ACTING ALL WARM AND FUZZY

HE'S SERIOUSLY PAYING!
Well, well, well...
HEY, HEY! ISN'T THAT THE PREPA-RATION MONEY LORD MISONOU GAVE US?!
Guess I'm beat...
HERE IT COMES. THE SLEEPER HOLD HE PRIDES HIMSELF IN.
YOU SEE, WHEN IT'S TIME TO PAY TRIBUTE, AMEYA'S...
EEEP!
...KILLING SIDE DOESN'T PAY TRIBUTE.
CALM DOWN AKUSAWA. HE CAN USE THAT GUY UP TO THE 30TH FLOOR
MY SHARE'S BEEN REDUCED
TCH-
NOW HE'S DONE IT. GOOD FOR NOTHING!
THAT FAR?!
EVERYONE WILL WELCOME HIM AMEYA IS VISIBLY HANDING OUT MONEY ON THE SURVEILLANCE CAMERA
EEEK!
THE PROBLEM IS GOING UP FROM THE 30TH FLOOR

To go up from there, an elevator transfer is necessary.


AAA level digital machinery is lame.
Guess he has confidence in the security other than himself.
The guard took the money for the whole group.

...is the analog*.
I guess the problem...

LET'S HEAD DOWN
HE'S COMING

Ding
32
WHAT DID YOU COME FOR?
YOU
PUN—
UH?

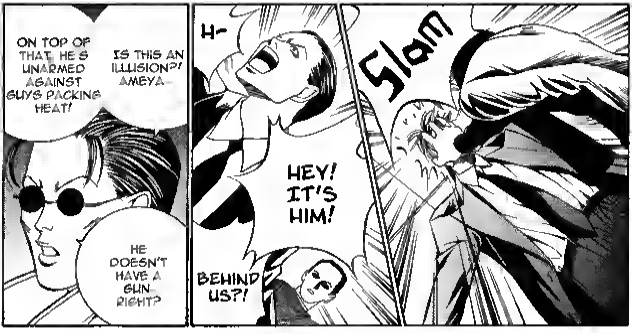
—K.
GAHHH!
DAMN YOU

Ping
Pluh
Squish
Di...

SIS...
THIS IS LIKE A NIGHTMARE...
IT'S LIKE AMEYA IS ACTUALLY COOL...
THOSE ARE NOTORIOUS BODYGUARDS, RIGHT?
THEY AREN'T EVEN TWITCHING
HE'S KILLED THEM INSTANTLY
INSTA-NTLY?
IT'S SLUGGISH BY AMEYA'S STANDARDS
IF HE WAS SERIOUS IT'D BE FASTER
BY THE WAY, THEY HAVEN'T BEEN KILLED. HE DID IT SO SKILLFULLY HE AVOIDED KILLING THEM.
THERE'S A LIMIT EVEN TO COW-ARDICE
GUESS WE SHOULD LOOK FORWARD TO THE 34TH FLOOR
AN ARMED SQUAD IS WAITING.

FIRE.
34
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
BANG BANG
BANG BANG

BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
I'M OVER HERE


ON TOP OF THAT, HE'S UNARMED AGAINST GUYS PACKING HEAT!
IS THIS AN ILLUSION?! AMEYA—
HE DOESN'T HAVE A GUN, RIGHT?
H-
Slam
HEY! IT'S HIM!
BEHIND US?!

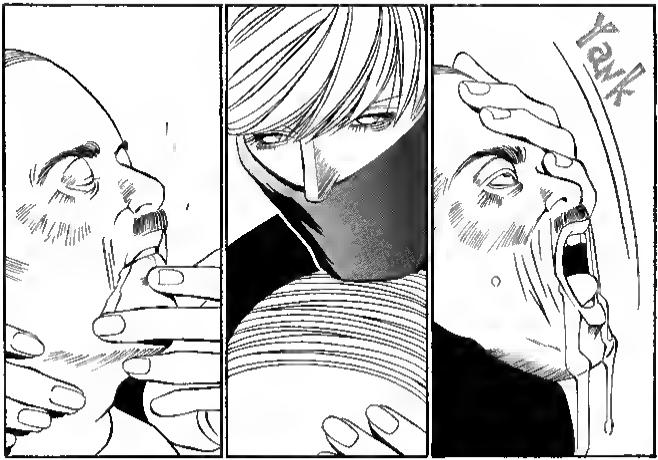
HUH?
AH!
YOU MISSED OUT ON SOMETHING GOOD
WHOA... HE WAS FAST THIS TIME
YOU THINK THAT COWARD WOULD CARRY SOMETHING LIKE A GUN?
IT HASN'T EVEN BEEN 30 SECONDS YET!
HEY! HEY!
!
SIS
THOSE LITTLE BULLETS STEER CLEAR OF AMEYA
THAT'S WHAT I SAID, YOU KNOW? HE'S FAST
AND NOT EVEN A SCRATCH!

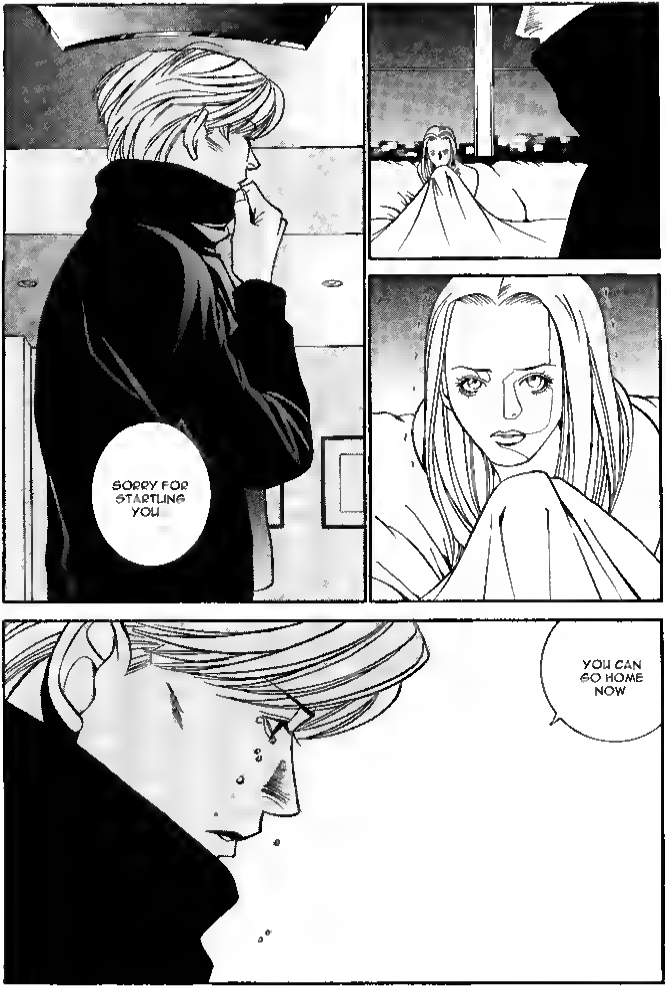
Bleep
Bleep
Bleep
Bleep
Bleep
Beep
ROBO-GUARDS?!
DANGER
DANGER
DANGER
DANGER
WHAT IS THAT-
BAMBAMBAMBAM
WIMPY, BUT EVEN IF HE DOES THAT, THEY WON'T PAINT. SERVES YOU RIGHT, MEY-[illegible]AH HA HA HA HA!
WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO, AMEYA?!
WIMPY, BUT THEY HAVE THE NUMBERS.
HEY, HEY!
BANG
BANG
BANG
WHAT ABOUT MY PREPARATION MONEEEEY?!

"ROBOTS AREN'T PEOPLE♥" OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, I'M SURE
UGH, HOW BORING
HE'S SHOOTING A GUN, AMEYA
HE'S FIRING IT OFF FEELS GOOD
SIS
NO MORE STRUGGLING NOW, EEE HEE HEE...
Oh... No...
AMEYA HAS ARRIVED.
OH, NO, WHAT'S WITH THAT FACE?
Enough already.
HE'S REALLY DOWN.
HIS SPIRIT...
IT'S UP TO YOUR FEELINGS FROM TOMORROW ON IT'LL BE A ROSY LIFE YOU KNOW?
NOW, FACE THIS WAY—
WE HAVE A LOVER'S CONTRACT RIGHT?
YOU'RE ALREADY MINE
Stop!

—AH!
WHO ARE YOU?
HEY!
SABUROU AMEYA
BY P
Shoe

HERE IT IS!
UUNH!
AA-


Yawk


SORRY FOR STARTLING YOU
YOU CAN GO HOME NOW

WHAT'VE YOU DONE, YOU OAF?!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "GO HOME?!"
WHAT HAVE THESE THREE MONTHS OF HARDSHIPS BEEN FOR...?
I TEASED HIM WITH RUNNING AWAY TO BRING UP THE PRICE
STARTING TODAY ALL OF HIS MONEY
WOULD'VE BEEN MINE!
YOU RUN THAT SWEETS SHOP, RIGHT?!
I'LL NEVER BUY ANYTHING FROM YOU!

Blockhead!
Thanks to you, my life is pitch dark!
UM...
I can't believe it!
You're the worst!
What're you thinking? Honestly, you moron!
Who do you think you are?
PREPARATION MONEY
IT ISN'T VERY MUCH BUT...
.....
MUUUU
BARELY-ANY-LEFT PREPA-RATION MONEEEEEEY!
HUUUH?!

ASSASSINS KILL PEOPLE.
CRYING, GETTING DEPRESSED, HANDING OVER MONEY!
BRING AMEYA HERE! I'LL KILL HIM SHITAMACHI STYLE!
EVEN IF WE KEEP QUIET, HE'LL COME BACK, SIS...
SOB SOB
WHO SAID HE'S THE TOP ASSASSIN?
AMEYA IS JUST A COWARD AFTER ALL.
Shuffle
Shuffle
Shuffle
I TOOK OUT 30,000 YEN TO STOCK THE SHOP...
I REALLY AM THE WORST...

Assassin Drop / END

侵餌する
死のガスパール
Gaspard of Encroaching Death

An abandoned dog has been buried in the ground, its head left to poke out. It has been starved to the utmost limit. A piece of bait is left a little beyond its reach, and on the brink of death, the dog writhes, trying to eat the bait. The dog cannot reach it. When, with a single stroke, its head is struck clean off its body, the dog's head tenaciously flies forward and attempts to devour the bait. Its head is scooped up, away from the bait, and burnt to ashes. The remains are placed within a container and buried at a busy crossroad. Only after it has been trampled upon many times is it exhumed and enshrined. Thus, the *inugami* is created, born to haunt the enactor of the ritual.

An *inugami* can grant wishes, but according to some, they are wishes of an unfortunate nature. Once created, it will never leave. Forever haunting the bloodline, the *inugami* will be inherited generation after generation.

This family line is known as *Inugami-mochi*.

***

"... she said she saw it at that old building. She's one of those people who claim to have high sensitivity to spirits. She seems to think there are spirits lingering around the university... Hey, are you listening?" Natsu peered at Hiisu's face which lay beside him. Hiisu was already falling asleep. Natsu brought his middle finger and thumb close to Hiisu's nicely shaped forehead and softly flicked him. Hiisu's eyelids flicked open with a start.

"Oh, sorry—I fell asleep..." He answered drowsily.

"It's fine. You can sleep."

"You're mad at me, aren't you, Natsu-kun?" Hiisu replied, piteously. *How unbearable.*

"I'm not mad at you."

Natsu always boisterously gossiped, even if it was his excuse to feel a little spoiled and to see Hiisu pout at him, even though Hiisu was five years older.

"I'm not mad, see? Look at my face." It looked like Hiisu wanted to say something, but his eyelids shut at the crucial moment before he would look at Natsu's face. But that didn't matter.

It had been eight months since Natsu tumbled into Hiisu's room. Including the time they'd been together before that, they'd known each other for over ten years. Natsu had loved Hiisu from the moment he came to their home after the accidental death of his parents. Hiisu was older, kind and reserved. In other words, he was weak under pressure. He had conscientiously endured until Natsu turned twenty and came of age without ever giving into Natsu's endeavors to tempt him.

"So, you see, she thinks she saw a spirit..." Hiisu was probably no longer listening. Though Natsu was aware of that, he continued to gossip. Sleeping in the same bed, chattering over trivial things on the verge of sleep, these things were precious to him.

The milky white light of the floor lamp dimly lit Hiisu's profile from jaw to cheek.

Compared to Natsu's feminine face and slender frame, Hiisu had a refined handsomeness that looked great in a business suit. He was tall and his body was *just right*. Natsu had felt that pleasant physique wrapped around him only moments ago.

Excluding Hiisu, there was no one in the world who could make Natsu feel the way he did now, as he slowly slipped away into dreamy subconsciousness. Natsu, still trembling and enveloped in happiness, had been scooped up by Hiisu and carried into the bathroom where the older man washed every part of his body. He then dressed him in clean clothes and tucked him into his tidied-up bed.

As usual, Hiisu had laid out his futon in the next room and had said goodnight with a shy smile. Natsu, feeling a little sulky, annoyed and oddly giggly, had asked him to sleep together.

How strange.

It seemed that in his eagerness to erase the *traces* of their night together, Hiisu had been too shy to look Natsu squarely in the face.

"Hiisu-kun, you coward…"

Natsu nuzzled his face against the strong, chiselled chest that had, just moments ago, been shuddering with shallow breaths. He decided that just looking wasn't enough and he pressed both hands against it.

"There are no such things as ghosts," Hiisu said. He opened his eyes, hazy with sleep, and looked at Natsu.

"Go back to sleep, Hiisu-kun. Sorry for waking you." Natsu apologized in return.

Hiisu's right eye was moister than his left, having been born with *heterochromia iridis*, or *odd-eye*. His left eye is black but his right eye is green. When it became moist like a lake and Hiisu's gaze was hazy, it felt to Natsu like he was swimming in a lake of green.

"Also, she didn't say *ghost*. She said, *spirit*," Natsu added. The girl who'd seen the spirit had told him not to call them ghosts because they're not monsters. She tended to use words like *spirits*, *souls*, and the *departed*, handling each word like a treasure. It was like she was reproaching Natsu for his ignorance of the existence of spirits.

"It's *ghost*." Hiisu said.

"Is it?"

"It's a ghost. How can ghosts and spirits be different?"

"Hiisu-kun, that's the kind of question I should be asking, don't you think?" Natsu was aware that Hiisu's birth family had been called *Inugami-mochi*.

"Why?"

"What do you mean, *why*? Isn't this sort of thing your speciality?"

Inugami-mochi employed dog spirits. Natsu had gotten a glimpse of the mysterious power Hiisu possessed. He was undoubtedly someone close to *that world*.

"I can't see ghosts..."

However, Hiisu had said *ghost* again like someone indifferent to the existence of spirits. What a boring thing to say.

Natsu kept silent. Perhaps sensing something, Hiisu's hand gently wrapped around Natsu's. It reminded Natsu of being skilfully loved by the same fingers earlier that night. Hiisu tenderly stroked Natsu's hand and Natsu's chest began to pound in anticipation.

"Natsu-kun, early next week you have to see someone unpleasant at school, right?"

Natsu looked into Hiisu's eyes. Though Hiisu seemed to have brought the topic out of nowhere, he found himself lightly drifting under the watch of his green eye.

"You're just borrowing something, right?"

I wonder how he knows that, Natsu thought to himself. He smiled emptily as he drowned in Hiisu's hazy green eyes, not caring to answer the question. Natsu felt as though he were wandering into a dream. *I want to drift into his lake.*

Ahh, I'm floating...

"Hey, Natsu-kun, whatever you receive... Do not open it on your own."

Ahh, I'm drowning. Though Natsu had only been lightly drifting moments before, he was now being sucked down.

"You absolutely must not open it until I come home. If you cannot avoid opening it-" Hiisu's words broke off midsentence.

Has he fallen asleep again? Just as Natsu thought that, Hiisu's sophisticated face drew near and he violently pressed his lips against him.

"...!"

It was an exceedingly passionate kiss even though Natsu hadn't pestered for it. Hiisu's tongue twisted around inside Natsu's mouth. He licked along the base of his teeth and slipped further and further inside, seeking, wanting. The moment he sensed that, Natsu's crotch began throbbing hotly. All thoughts became hazy and he felt himself submitting to Hiisu. Pleasure filled him as though it would seep out and he trembled, begging to be touched. *More, more, more!*

Hiisu blew a large huff of breath, just one puff, as strong as artificial respiration.

Boom

"Ah!"

Suddenly, the fever left Natsu's body. It was as if something had been plunged inside his head. A rational mass that felt very cold, frozen and pure. It suddenly fell from the top of Natsu's head and settled inside him.

"What was that...?"

Hiisu's face parted from his. Since Hiisu pulled back while Natsu had been centred on his eyes, it seemed to Natsu as though he had rapidly begun to shrink.

"...A charm."

With that, Hiisu shut his eyes

"Hiisu-kun, are you asleep? Hiisu-kun…?" Even though Natsu had just been drifting, he now felt lonely and slipped himself under Hiisu's chest. Natsu had been pulled into Hiisu's odd eye.

The person here isn't really me. It's probably just an empty husk. When he thought that, Natsu felt as though he really had been sucked away somewhere and then he, too, fell into a deep slumber.

***

The next morning, Natsu joined Hiisu for breakfast.

Hiisu completed his morning preparations, already wearing the colored contact and rimmed glasses he used to hide his *odd-eye*. The Hiisu with two black eyes always appeared distant. Natsu understood that this was his way of avoiding attention, but all the same, he didn't like it.

"Do you remember what you said to me last night before we went to sleep?" Natsu asked. Today he was supposed to meet with the person who'd planned the appointment.

"You know, ghosts appear to people who want to see them," Hiisu replied, rather than admitting that he remembered.

"Really?"

"That's why you can't see them, Natsu-kun."

He made no attempt to explain it any further. Since Hiisu had replied so calmly, Natsu left it at that and saw Hiisu off to work with a smile.

And now he was regretting it.

***

Natsu was in the old building of the university. The landing was especially dark in the windowless stairway. For a while, Natsu was unable to face the corner of the landing where shadows collected like dust. *Didn't you say I wouldn't be able to see, Hiisu-kun?*

The setting sun had just begun to lower its head and light and showed mingled together. Inside the building of heavy stone, not even the bustle of the twilight hour passed through the walls and a hazy gloom like that of a bad dream drifted through the halls.

Natsu climbed the staircase whilst running his hand over the black granite handrail. He was just about to reach the connecting landing to the third floor when he heard a *clink*. The frosted glass light that hung from the ceiling had shut off.

There are no such things as spirits! I've never seen any and I don't believe in them!

Yet Natsu froze, one foot on the landing, unable to shift his eyes away from the corner. Without logical reason, his body somehow knew that he must not move his eyes.

Hiisu-kun!

Something was there.

It's there! Something is definitely there!

He remained paralyzed, feeling sure that if he moved, something would happen. The desire to run and the desire to let it pass without being noticed fought inside of Natsu. In the end, he remained frozen.

I'm probably being affected by some sort of evil curse... If this is a curse, I have to break it!

Natsu tried to speak but, just like in a nightmare, the words wouldn't form. His lips refused to part and his throat closed up. He couldn't even let out a groan. *I should at least look away.* Natsu tried to shift his gaze one step lower than where it had remained focused. At that moment, the presence of *it* increased as if crushing his attempt.

Hiisu-kun!

His skin prickled. Something with a strong purpose was trying to lift Natsu's gaze higher.

Hiisu-kun! Hiisu-kun!

It was whirling, a black, human-like mass.

Natsu's eyes were locked on the appearance. It was whirling, its back facing Natsu. It shook bit by bit, as though it were convulsing. It was about the size of a monkey, but it was not a child. Natsu sensed something like male genitals, too large for a child.

That's right. It's got male genitals and it's making slopping noises... It's masturbating!

Natsu had realized why the spectre seemed to be violently convulsing. It was rubbing itself, unbelievably violent in its actions. Isn't it peeling the skin off? It's skinning itself... Slopping blood and flesh. It made no attempt to ease the force it used to tug itself. Natsu wondered why it was going so far.

It's just like a monkey. No... wait. Isn't it strange? How do I know what it's doing when I'm not even looking at it? It has its back to me in the first place. Why can I see its genitals... the blood clinging, flesh ripped, making that slopping sound. But even though I shouldn't be able to see it, I know that it's smiling. It's smiling at me with yellow, scum covered teeth while it strokes itself with incredible force. Shit! It sees me! It's using me to masturbate! It's looking at me with lustful eyes and licking its lips. HIISU-KUN!

Natsu shuddered as he watched its arms twist in impossible directions.

With its twisted arms it was rubbing its genitals
Its genitals which had swelled to at least five times their original size
Its genitals are growing out the back of its neck!
Natsu now understood why he could distinguish the creature's facial expressions despite the fact that the head should have been in no position to be seen
Hiisu-kun! Its head isn't attached to its neck! Its head is growing from its crotch!
It suddenly stretched and peered at Natsu from around its flank-
Natsu blacked out
When he came to, his gaze, that should have been averted, was staring at it before he realized. His gaze was met with deep red, bloodshot eyes
It's all over... He instantly thought. There was no reason. It was just as if that was instantly, strongly, completely the truth

With its head beneath its arm, the incomprehensible thing silently held its position and then began quietly drawing closer to Natsu
Hiisu-kun!
Natsu called his name as if in prayer. His voice wouldn't come out, but Natsu's lips, which had been pasted shut and wouldn't open until now, mouthed a showed of his name
It isn't watching *me...*
It's being forced *to watch me...*

A voice resonated inside Natsu's head. Suddenly, a very rational mass of something very cold, frozen and pure settled inside Natsu with a boom. He remembered the sensation. His consciousness, which had been locked inside this bad dream, was at once restored to reality.
It's Hiisu-kun!
Something instantly flew from Natsu's mouth. Something cold, small and transparent. It plunged straight into the evil black mass
It went straight through.
Or so it seemed. It purified the evil – opening a hole in the very centre of its belly. After twisting its face in anguish it burst apart and vanished. At the same time a terrible rapping sound echoed off the stone walls and lasted perhaps five or ten seconds

When Natsu regained his composure, he noticed that the school building had fallen silent – no, the bustle outside was faintly seeping through. It was only moments before when he had been isolated from all sounds of the outside world as if the old building had become a cut-off, deserted island. He even felt as if it had become somewhat brighter.
Not wanting to linger any longer in this cursed place, Natsu started to climb the stairs in the direction of the fourth floor. The person he had an appointment with was waiting there. Suddenly, Natsu felt a small, transparent entity looking up at him from somewhere near his feet.

"You... You're a dog, right?"

It seemed somewhat doggish.

"You're Hiisu-kun's *inugami*, aren't you?"

He wasn't exactly seeing it with his eyes, but Natsu smiled and started talking to the small, transparent thing. There was no mistaking that it had appeared because of Hiisu's *charm*.

The transparent dog accompanied Natsu until they arrived in front of the room on the fourth floor where Natsu was expected. When Natsu knocked, and after affirming a response, he opened the door and entered the room, the *inugami* clinging about his feet. In using Natsu's feet, it was probably attempting to put its body in a blind spot – though whose blind spot that was, Natsu didn't know.

"Yoshikawa-kun, are you free after this?" Natsu was suddenly asked, with no introduction.

The man who had spoken was Hayashida, the man he'd planned to meet. Hayashida was the head professor for the cultural debate class Natsu was taking. It was hard to guess at his age, he seemed to be somewhere between forty and fifty years old. He was the type of person who paid close attention to his personal appearance and believed that it represented the kind of person he was.

His chiselled, pleasant-seeming face held a sort of confidence that revealed that he was a stereotypical *nice-guy*; the sort that deceives women who are ignorant to the ways of the world.

"I haven't eaten anything since breakfast. If possible, I'd like to grab a bite to eat right away."

While making a show of shuffling documents from his desk to his briefcase, Hayashida said, "If it's alright, how about you join me? I'll treat you."

"If that's the case, I'll take the CD and head home." Natsu knew of Hayashida's usual ploys.

Hayashida would involve himself in a sexual relationship with anyone, without care that his partner was a student. At first, Natsu had assumed this was merely a rumor. But now, having been targeted himself, Natsu knew the truth. That the professor is bisexual was also true. Hayashida saw Natsu not as a student, but as a target for his sexual appetites. Lately, he had boldly been letting his intentions known.

Natsu, who hated Hayashida's type, had entirely no interest to begin with. The reason Natsu had promised to meet the professor today was because Hayashida had said he would lend Natsu a rare CD that was out of production. It was a Scarlatti sonata collection performed by a pianist called Y. Natsu had firmly remembered Hiisu muttering about wanting to listen to it.

"Scarlatti, right? It's in my car." Natsu simply appeared annoyed with Hayashida's use of an excessively worthless cliché.

"Don't pout... It's too erotic when kids like you with a mole by their mouths make that kind of face."

Hayashida had taken a painful liking to the mole that sat by Natsu's mouth.

Natsu was aware that he gave off a mysterious charm that made people stop and think, "I'd like to see that boy again, and take my time looking." He had handsome features, a delicate but comfortable body, androgynous at a glance and he radiated the aura of a pure, young boy. But thanks to his mole, Natsu's mouth was erotic. Even in an untainted setting where sex had no place, the suggestive mole stood out. The imbalance was probably unbearable for people like Hayashida.

"I'm joking. Here, the Scarlatti."

Hayashida produced a black paper bag from inside his briefcase and handed it to Natsu. It seemed that the CD was inside. Gauging the distance from which he could safely stretch out his hand and barely reach, Natsu approached Hayashida. When Natsu reached for the bag, Hayashida suddenly pulled it back.

Holding the bag up next to his head, Hayashida looked at Natsu, who had missed it, and smiled.

It was a way of smiling that showed off his dentist-bleached, unnaturally white teeth. Natsu couldn't help but think of it as anything but unpleasant. To Hayashida, it was a smile to boast of.

"I'll lend it to you if you answer a question." His openly sexual smile revealed a confidence that countless female students had fallen for.

"You smell faintly of bodily fluids..."

"What?"

Presenting the black paper bag once again, Hayashida said, "Did you have sex recently, Yoshikawa-kun?"

I shouldn't have come. No matter how much he'd said it was for Hisu, he shouldn't have exposed himself to such unpleasant eyes.

This man was violating Natsu with his eyes.

With his bare, unnaturally white teeth, he was trying to snap at Natsu's sexuality.

Inside his head, Hayashida must be rubbing his genitals that have swelled to at least five times their normal size. So much that his skin tears...

Ah.

Natsu realized something as soon as the thought appeared.

The black mass that had been on landing earlier, the monster that had bared its yellow teeth while using Natsu as a tool for its masturbation— Didn't its face resemble that of Hayashida's? No, more like its face was Hayashida's itself.

Natsu shuddered. He had realized something he shouldn't have.

"...You've figured it out?"

The blood drained from his entire body.

Hayashida cocked his head at what seemed to be at least a ninety-degree angle. He was looking at Natsu, staring, with eyes that were a deep, rotten red.

Uuuuugh.

It was a terrible moan, the likes of which Natsu had never heard before.

Hayashida held his stomach as his entire body convulsed. Natsu recalled that that was the place where Hisu s *inugami* had plunged through earlier.

Something like a black mist was rising from the area of the wound.

Swaying from side to side as it twisted, a surprising amount of the mist gushed out of Hayashida's belly. *What is this?*

Though it was something mist-like, it cast no shadow and its pitch blackness was too dense. It was an entity even more vivid than Hayashida who had substance. Natsu could do nothing more than stare stupidly. As though it were feeding on Hayashida's swooning agony, the mist-like entity multiplied, finally reaching the ceiling. The malicious mass was violently blowing against Natsu, becoming a high wall and placing pressure on Natsu's lungs.

"INUGAMI. I RETURN YOUR SHIKIGAMI....." A deep voice came from the black mist and a strong wind viciously cut through the atmosphere with a *whoosh*.

The deep, pitch blackness extended hand-like feelers which rained down from above as if to capture Natsu.

Hisu-kun, help!

Sparks scattered.

It's a dog! It's Hisu-kun's dog!

It plunged between Natsu and the pitch blackness and repelled the feelers. Suddenly, the dog rolled over before the black entity and Natsu reached a hand toward it.

"Quickly, over here! Come over here!"

"INUGAMI.. YOU MAY NO LONGER USE THAT SHIKIGAMI....." With the hopeless verdict, the dog let out a hard sound between a bark and a yelp, then shattered into pieces and dispersed.

A great number of minute fragments flew into Natsu s outstretched hand. Losing to Natsu's body temperature, they melted in an instant. What he had thought were sparks had been fragments of water.

"No way....."

Hisu-kun, have you disappeared?

The strength left his legs and Natsu sunk to his knees on the spot, only his gaze followed the incomprehensible terror before his eyes.

The black mist whirled around, preparing to spew something out. Countless feelers were already spread before Natsu, full of malice. They were fiddling with Hayashida's crotch. Earlier, Hayashida had been watching Natsu, swooning with an entirely different type of agony. His bloodshot eyes were desirous and stirred with obscene fantasies.

Hayashida took a step forward, and then another. Drooling and clacking together the bared white teeth he was so proud of, he approached Natsu. Hayashida brought his black feelers together as if he was displaying them to Natsu and they accelerated the pace with which they fiddled with his crotch.

That was when Natsu's cell phone rang.

It's Hisu-kun! This ringtone is Hisu-kun's!

I have to answer! I have to!

That was the last thing he remembered thinking. Natsu had lost consciousness.

***

When Natsu came to, he was in Hiisu's room.

He couldn't recall how he had gotten home. He was standing in the centre of the room, looking down at the stereo in front of him. He also noticed that there was something in his hands. It was the black paper bag. It was sealed with red wax, an imperial seal pressed into it. Natsu couldn't distinguish the characters from its design but decided that it was creepy.

Realizing that it was the paper bag Hayashida had given him earlier, Natsu gave a small shriek and dropped it on the floor. The red sealing wax broke and scattered like splashes of blood. The top, which should have remained sealed, opened itself and a still-unmarked silver disk flew out from inside.

"Absolutely do not open it until I come home..."

Natsu couldn't believe it. He'd opened it before Hiisu returned. He had opened it...

"Why...?" Natsu couldn t believe his own actions.

He had picked up the CD and slipped it into the stereo. An unstoppable desire to listen to it swelled within him. Though in his head he knew he shouldn't do it, his body lost to the desire. Natsu pushed the play button without hesitation.

Natsu couldn t tell if what he heard were Scarlatti s sonatas. He didn t know much about classical music. *If I was told it was Bach, I'd believe it.* A baroque-style piano tune streamed forth.

Each note was played so clearly that even an amateur like Natsu understood it. It resounded deep within him. With a sweet sound like the scattering of jewels interwoven with a geometric pattern, it seemed like the magnificent stained glass windows of a cathedral. Absorbed in listening, Natsu hadn t noticed that the volume was slowly but steadily decreasing.

Natsu now had his ear pressed against the speaker, pursuing the sound. It was already so distant that the sound of his own breath hindered his ability to hear it. Natsu stopped breathing and pressed his ear more attentively to the speaker.

"KYAAAAAAAAA!"

Natsu jumped back in shock. It was a woman's high-pitched shriek and it pierced Natsu's eardrums with tremendous volume.

In a fluster, Natsu leapt at the stereo and turned down the volume, but no matter how much he turned the knob, the volume did not decrease. The woman's shrieking wouldn't stop.

Natsu hurriedly pressed the stop button. It was no good. The CD kept spinning with no response.

The woman's scream went on and grew even more fraught with notes of duress. It seemed to Natsu that his eardrums would break.

No matter how many times I press, the CD won't stop. No good. How irritating. Maybe it's broken?

Already beginning to feel desperate, Natsu stood up and pulled the power cord out of the socket.

"Why...?!" The CD continued to play. *It won't stop! The CD... This woman's shrieking won't stop!*

Natsu's body began trembling violently. He held himself tightly. It was the kind of scene he'd seen on television or in a movie. Perhaps even in a novel. He tried to distract himself by thinking of trivial things, but soon found that it was useless. He felt like he would throw up as his fears poured out one by one.

Why won't it stop?

What kind of power is making this thing play?

Who is this woman? Is she human? Is it possible to scream persistently in such a high-pitched voice?

The shriek couldn't have been taken as an *eek* or an *aah*. It had become something far beyond comprehension, something that couldn't be expressed as anything but a shriek. Desperate and full of panic, the piercing cry had changed from an earthly bass to a surreal soprano, undulating like waves between musical intervals, on and on and on... Was the woman even breathing?

"Stop! Please, stop!" Natsu trembled and covered his ears. He was beginning to go mad.

"Listen properly. The good part is coming up."

A familiar voice came from behind and Natsu turned with a start.

It's Hayashida!

The professor was standing before Natsu, looking at him with deep red eyes.

"Why...?!"

"We came home together. You don't remember?" Hayashida said with his proud smile showing off his bleached teeth. "It was right before you lost consciousness in my office. Your cell phone rang and you answered it even though that was rather rude, right?"

The phone call had been from Hiisu. Did he speak to Hiisu?

"After that you spat horrible curses at me. You really are an unbelievable kid, knowing such atrocious language..."

"Spells..."

"Ah, don't worry. I understand. There's no way a pure kid like you would use such words. That abomination, that *inugami* told you! Thanks to it, I was unable to touch you. But I put up a barrier and I managed to follow you home without you even noticing. Hell, I was stuck to your back and came into your home with you and you didn't catch a thing!"

Hayashida let out a vulgar guffaw.

"Your inability to see me was quite lucky. I spat in every direction in the entranceway and cursed your inugami-mochi four times. He can't come inside anymore! He can't even see the entrance!"

The woman's shrieking stopped.

In its place, lewd panting began to reverberate through the room
It was a sound that Natsu knew well; the persistent slopping sound of rubbing hot genitals engorged with blood. On listening, obscene words were issuing forth, one after another, from the woman's mouth.
Just like a curse.
With that as his signal, Hayashida began to hideously transform. His orderly hair stood on end, his back warped with a jerk and his arms began to grow grotesquely long, stretching almost to reach the floor. With the hunched movements of an ape, Hayashida descended upon Natsu.

Natsu was pushed down. Hayashida's ugly, ape-like face revolted Natsu as it tried to draw close again and again. He thrust out his tongue, trying to stick it inside Natsu's mouth. His breath gave off a violently acrid smell and Natsu had a coughing fit, fighting the urge to throw up. Hayashida's tongue slobbered over Natsu's soft cheek. When he attempted to push away Hayashida's body in revulsion, the ape-like professor smiled in that disgustingly proud way of his. His bared teeth were a deep yellow.
They were the yellow teeth of that creepy mass Natsu had seen on the landing.
The clothing on Hayashida's body dissolved in clumps as if it were soaked in acid. It melted unevenly, tangling revoltingly with the body hair emerging from the gaping holes. His grotesque skin began to show and it was the color of well-worn male genitalia. The way it was entangled with his body hair and the way his abnormal veins began to bulge... Hayashida's entire body was now turning into a single, engorged sexual organ. A silent scream rose in Natsu.
Hayashida's hands twined themselves around Natsu's resisting body and spun him around. Before he had the time to notice, his clothing was being rolled up and hands were groping his body. Giving off a sticky sensation, they loitered along Natsu's flanks before slowly creeping upward.
"Nnh-" Hayashida's boorish fingers grasped at Natsu's nipples.
"Sto-"
He couldn't finish his sentence. The hands surrounded him from both sides and were skilfully pinching his two sensitive nubs. At the same time, Hayashida's long tongue had thrust into his ear, twisting and groping inside with great acuity.
An ache that was neither hatred nor pleasure ran through Natsu's whole body.
Hayashida's fingers, tormenting him from behind, were deft. Whilst rubbing circles over Natsu's areolae, they persistently stroked at his chest from a distance that neither firmly touched nor completely abandoned his sensitive nipples. It was unbearable. To be touched at all made them want to be toyed with. Though he was being fondled, he wasn't satisfied. Natsu's body twisted. With superb timing, Hayashida violently flicked one nub. Pleasure raced through Natsu's entire body and he quivered in delight. The part of him that hadn't been satisfied became inflamed.

I want to be teased. I want to be toyed with!

Hayashida began stroking his areolae again. He was being teased and persistently toyed with. Just as he stopped teasing him, Hayashida flicked Natsu's nipple, eliciting a pleasant tingly feeling.

"Aah-!"

"Want me to do it harder?"

"...Nnh."

"Try saying please. Say, 'Please tease my nipples harder.' Look!"

Both of Natsu's nubs were rubbed furiously.

"Ah- ah-!"

After teasing them, he feverishly kneaded them. Natsu felt the pleasure race through him immediately. Hayashida held Natsu from behind and, after rhythmically kneading his nipples, he pinched them.

"Ah-!" It felt superb.

"Does it feel good? Hm?"

The disgusting Hayashida's lewdly wriggling fingers were exposed from Natsu's upturned clothing. With his middle fingers, Natsu's inflamed nipples were poked, kneaded, pinched and flicked. How unbearable.

The pleasure rolled around inside his body like a living thing. Natsu gripped Hayashida's teasing hands and, matching his movements, Natsu began to lewdly wriggle his hips. Hayashida was holding him from behind and he could feel his bulging, engorged penis pressing against his back. Natsu twisted his body, enabling himself to rub against it.

"I see... You want it here too, huh?" Hayashida whispered into his ear. While amply kneading Natsu's nubs, Hayashida slipped a hand over Natsu's lustful lower half. Unbearable. Unbelievably unbearable.

Natsu gave himself up to Hayashida's sexual appetite. He felt as though he wasn't himself; that he had become something else entirely. Nothing mattered anymore. His only concern was the satisfaction of his desire. Hayashida's hand that stroked Natsu's penis was a third hand, impossible for any human. Natsu was too far gone to notice.

***

Hisu was standing before the door to the entranceway, perplexed.

He knew that Natsu was inside, even though he'd been ringing on the intercom for quite some time, even though he'd been shouting and hitting on the door, there had been no answer. Every time he'd attempted to unlock the door, it wouldn't open. All this evidence pointed to the fact that something which should not be was with Natsu.

Hisu removed his glasses and put a finger to his right eyelid. He took out his black color contact. The green eye that appeared from under his contact lens was moist, much the same as it had been the day before when it had made Natsu swim. That moisture built, turning into a single tear, which fell.

Hiisu caught the tear in the palm of his hand and used it to draw a character on his palm.

Natsu Yoshikawa. He silently muttered the name and blew a puff of air. The teardrop manifested into the shape of a transparent dog.

Hiisu's transparent messenger dog jumped up to a little vent above the front door and slipped through the crack. Small washi papers with "Hisashi Ozuka" written on them had been put inside plastic bags and secretly pasted to the entrance and exit of the vent. They made a sort of barrier that would allow only Hiisu to use it. The vent was a hidden passage that he had prepared in case anything should happen.

The transparent dog advanced down the passage and slipped out from the ten centimetre square cornice vent that was installed on the inside of the living room. At that moment, Hayashida stirred as though he were looking for something, but before he could catch it, the transparent dog went into Natsu's body.

***

It's Hiisu-kun's lake...

Natsu noticed himself lightly drifting upon a green lake. Hayashida had disappeared from before his eyes and the scenery around him was changing into a green lake inside a deep forest. The burning desire he'd been feeling until then vanished like a lie. he felt clean and refreshed.

I wonder where I am...

"You're inside my eye." Natsu heard Hiisu's voice. "Stay here a little while. I'm going to pretend to be you and enter the room. I've left a replacement inside your body, Natsu-kun."

***

Hiisu reached for the door knob and twisted it. This time it opened naturally with entirely no effort.

He entered swiftly, moving directly to the living room without showing any inclination of hiding his presence. Natsu was in there, and a little closer to Hiisu was Hayashida, dressed in an exorbitant amount of gaudy brand-name clothing and accessories. The two of them weren't doing anything improper. They weren't saying anything and they weren't looking at anything, they were in a daze.

Hiisu took some salt and cooking sake from the kitchen. Using those, he cautiously drew a circle around Natsu. Before completing the circle, Hiisu muttered an incantation. The transparent dog left Natsu's body upon hearing Hiisu's command.

The *mugami* was greatly swollen and enlarged. Without leaving even a trace behind, the dog had eaten all of the desires that were not a natural part of Natsu. Inside its transparent body a black mist could be seen winding itself in coils.

With a look from Hiisu, the dog headed for Hayashida and Hiisu completed the circle around Natsu. It was there to protect Natsu's vacant body. Next, Hiisu drew a circle around Hayashida, with the dog by his side. This circle was a larger, enough for four people.

In Hiisu's green eye could be seen two others in addition to Hayashida and the dog. One was the abominable mass with Hayashida's face which Natsu had seen on the landing. The other was the spirit of a woman of about twenty years old who was enjoying having her breasts and vagina fondled with by that *thing*.

The woman was in a terrible state. Her skin had begun to corrode. Her eyelids, which looked as though they'd melt and slip away at any moment, were turned down as she wriggled her hips with ecstasy. She had been using Natsu's sexuality to indulge in Hayashida's desires. Her goal had been to draw Natsu into Hayashida's fantasy, assimilate with him, destroy him, and become Hayashida's fantasy partner in his place.

The other abominable mass was Hayashida's obscene soul itself. It hadn't even noticed that it was toying with a woman's decomposing breats. Hiisu believed that Hayashida had already been devoured half to death.

Absorbed in dissolute caresses, Hayashida and the decomposing woman didn't notice Hiisu's presence at all. Hiisu closed the circle containing them and went to the entranceway. He sprinkled an ample amount of water and thoroughly cleaned the place. Finally, he headed for the stereo. When he returned the power cord to the wall outlet, he let out a loud *clap*. Afterward, when he pressed the stop button, the CD obediently stopped. The curse drawing Natsu into hallucination broke and the evil energy swirling around the room ceased.

After a while, Natsu awoke within the circle.

"Are you okay, Natsu-kun? I'm sorry, I did badly." Hiisu immediately apologized, though he had done nothing wrong.

Natsu laughed and shook his head. But, like a child, he softly clutched at the cuff of Hiisu's suit. Hiisu struggled to find the right words.

"Don't worry, Natsu-kun. I'm here."

"..."

"There's a woman's spirit possessing him. Probably a girl he picked up for fun..." After giving it a little thought, Hiisu asked, "What should I do, Natsu-kun?"

I might blunder and make the wrong decision. Thinking that, he entrusted the choice to the purest person he knew.

"...?"

"She is no longer living but she hasn't exactly died yet, either. If I release her like that, I think your teacher will probably be haunted to death within a month..."

"Really? Then, it'd be wrong to do nothing about it." Natsu replied quickly and concisely. "We can't lend a hand in killing someone."

Especially Hiisu-kun, Natsu added to himself. He didn't care about Hayashida, but to Natsu, Hiisu was of the utmost importance.

"But..." Hiisu began to say, but he swallowed his words. These kind of weak feelings would dishearten him and he had, after all, left the decision to Natsu. He knew well what kind of situation he would put the woman's spirit in, afterwards. However,

"In that case, we need to do something about the woman..." Muttering as if to convince himself, Hiisu stepped into the circle containing Hayashida.

"Don't look, Natsu-kun. You'll see something unpleasant."

Natsu grasped at Hiisu's suit and entered with him. He grinned and looked up at Hiisu. Though he struggled to explain the situation, he ended up getting nowhere. In the end, Hiisu chose the most pitiful excuse he could muster, one he would have avoided had it been anyone else.

"You'll probably end up hating me..." There was no way Natsu would agree with such an excuse. As if to negate his reasoning, Natsu firmly peered around Hiisu to see what he was obstructing from view. Natsu now saw the figure of a woman and his smile vanished upon seeing the terrible decay of her skin. Hiisu wanted to say something, but Natsu firmly clutched at his suit again and Hiisu fell silent.

At first, the woman was looking at Natsu and Hiisu with a face full of wonder. After a while, however, she understood that her own curse and barrier had been broken and that, conversely, she had been locked inside Hiisu's circle. She let out a terrifying yell.

"INUGAMIIIII! WHAT IS THIS BARRIERRRRR?!" Her voice was full of anger. For the woman, it was the first time she'd seen such a thing.

"Too bad, this is an original. I don't know how to make a proper barrier, but thanks to that, you don't know it – therefore you cannot escape."

"HOW DARE YOU GET IN THE WAY OF SENSEI AND IIIIII!"

This was probably what people mean when they said that someone has the look of a demon. The woman spread her eyes so wide that her eyeballs seemed to pop out of her skull and she bared her teeth; the only things on her that still seemed somewhat healthy. The brittle skin on her face tautened and split apart in clumps.

The woman clasped the head of the hideous soul beside her, Hayashida's exposed soul, and violently tore it from its neck. She flung it at Hiisu. Hayashida's warped face bared its yellow teeth and attacked Hiisu. Natsu hid behind him.

"It's useless. I'm stronger."

Hiisu peered at the freshly severed head with his green eye. That was all he had done, but with one glance, Hayashida's head dispersed. At the same moment, the remaining portion, whirling at the woman's feet, vanished into thin air.

"WHAT HAVE YOU DOOOONE?!"

"Sensei has had his soul returned. Give up. You understand, right? He was just toying with you." Hiisu forced himself to speak frankly.

"ARE YOU A FOOOL?" She laughed derisively. It was a scornful laughter overflowing with baseless confidence in the belief that she was indeed loved.

"But you've noticed, haven't you?"

Timidly hanging his head with the face of a man who seemed to be about to lose at any moment, Hiisu said, "That hideous thing is your teacher. He is truly an insubstantial being consisting only of obscene desires."

"He's a lowlife without a fragment of purity. An image that would cause anyone to flee in fear. On the stairway, you threatened Natsu-kun with the image of your Senser's soul, right? To anyone, this is a monstrous soul, but that hideous form is the image you have of him, aplifi-"

"AAAAAAAAAH!!" With an incomprehensible shout, the woman's spirit charged at them.

Hiisu covered Natsu and raised his left hand, lightly sweeping it in front of himself. In an instant, a blue point like the eye of a needle appeared in the middle of the room. The spirit, aimed in that direction, was sucked inside with terrible force. The wind cried in great gushes and swirls of mists coiled and chased after the spirit. Only Hiisu knew that the wind was the dog that had devoured the desires and had been waiting by Hayashida's side. In an instant, the mysterious point closed.

The atmosphere felt cleansed. Natsu finally let go of Hiisu's cuff and looked up at his face.

"What's wrong?" He asked.

"She returned to her container..."

"Her container...?"

"The remains... I more or less know where they are."

Hiisu's dog allowed itself to be sucked up itself, creating a route.

"Her evil spirit vanished! I'm saved!" Hayashida suddenly shouted. It was the real Hayashida who hadn't stirred at all until now. He stood up, fussing over the wrinkles in his suit, and rambled on and on.

"You! Are you a shaman or something? There's seems to be a slight misunderstanding. I'm a victim! She stalked me for nearly two years! She tried to use charms to curse me, she sent me disturbing CD's! At any rate, I've been through a terrible ordeal. You'll exorcise that evil spirit, won't you? Of course, I'll pay you if you do! But well, about her death... It seems that she committed suicide in the end..."

"...You killed her, didn't you?" It was an icy voice. Natsu shuddered.

"Hey — You killed her, DIDN'T YOU?!" Hiisu raged.

His gaze was piercing. Hayashida's entire body froze. The cold look of black and green was imbalanced, eerie, and curse-like. He instantly understood that they were the eyes of something from the same world as that spirit, yet more ominous. Contorting the shape of his mouth, Hayashida's bleached white teeth chattered nervously.

Hiisu's eyes were like those of a demon who sees all. He spoke the professor in a low, controlled voice.

"You were the first one to make a move, weren't you? You broke up with her poorly and she followed you. After she became unmanageable, you killed her."

"I didn't kill her! I-I only gave her drugs! She'd been making a fuss about wanting to try something for a while so I did as she asked! Then, she lost consciousness-"

"So you dumped her in the mountains? Just how much drugs did you give her? She died of an overdose! She's drifting about like that because you couldn't kill her properly!"

Hiisu felt a soft tug at his suit. He dropped his eyes and gazed into Natsu's face. He was looking up at Hiisu, silently reproaching.

"You said we have to do something, right?" Hiisu spoke as though he were squeezing out the words. He gripped Hayashida's arm.

"Let's go."

"W-Where? To do what?!"

This time, Hiisu spoke indifferently.

"We're going to kill her."

***

The scent of the air changed. Hayashida looked around in surprise. Though he had been in Hiisu's living room only moments before, with a blink he had opened his eyes and found himself in the dark mountains. It almost seemed like he would choke on the oxygen spewing out from the trees.

Natsu was clutching Hiisu's suit and acting meek. Artificial light couldn't be seen in the area. They were probably a good way off the mountain road.

"Where... are we?" Hayashida asked foolishly.

"Don't they say that souls travel fast?" Hiisu said. It was as if he had explained how they had come here beforehand. In other words, he was probably trying to say that it was only their souls in the vacant forest. Hiisu pointed ahead.

"Look, that's where you deserted her, she's over there."

Hayashida followed the line of his gesture. As his gaze weaved among the procession of dark trees, about ten or so meters tall, and he saw that there was just one spot where the moonlight dimly struck the earth. Leaning against a thick, rugged trunk, a woman's clothes were reflected in the moonlight.

"Eep-!"

The woman's clothes were dishevelled, her breasts and thighs jutting out and colored a disturbing shade. They had become mottled with spots and her flesh was already beginning to disintegrate. It was an already decomposing corpse and it was agonizing to look at.

"Eeeep!" Hayashida cried again. He had remembered leaving her in such a pose. He recalled opening her clothes wide, exposing her vagina and the breasts that jutted out of her top. He remembered the sensation of rubbing them.

He had brought her here, deeply asleep and under the influence, to this place. He'd thought, "She'll learn her lesson with this," and, "Even if she dies, what do I care?"

Driven by sudden sadistic thoughts about raping a girl in this kind of situation,

with an idiotic personality unable to curb his desires, Hayashida had seized the girl and cruelly violated her.

The woman had begun to putrefy, maintaining her pose.

"How terrible . . ." Hiisu said. "We have to kill her properly after all."

"What are you saying?! No matter which way you look at it, she's already dead, isn't she!"

"No, she's still alive. Look . . ."

As if it heard Hiisu speak, the corpse opened its eyes. She had died, but she was still alive. Only her soul, not yet cut off by death, was there.

Her crumbling eyelids, unable to endure any longer, fell with a *plop* and Hayashida was sickeningly entranced by her inflamed, deep red eyes. Her lips, which had begun melt away, opened in stretched out strands. Soil mixed with maggots fell around her in clumps.

"SENSEEEEI . . . SENSEEEI . . . YOU CAME FOR MEEEE . . ."

"Eeeep-!" Hayashida shuddered and clung to Hiisu.

"I . . . I CAN'T GET OOOOUT FROM HEEERE . . . EVEN THOOUGH I COOULD BEFOOORE . . . SENSEEEEI . . . SENSEEEI . . . LET ME OOOOUT . . ."

She continued as though she were singing.

"SENSEEEEI . . . LET ME OOOUT . . .

SENSEEEEI . . . LET ME OOOUT . . .

LET MEEE . . . OUT OF MEEEE . . . SENSEEEEI . . . LET ME OOOUT . . . FROM INSIIIIDE OF MEEE . . . LET ME OOOOUT!"

"Really, how appalling . . ." Hiisu muttered.

"Save me, save me!" Hayashida cried.

"The one who wants saving is her. Please hurry and kill her properly."

Hiisu tore Hayashida off of him and tossed him aside. A large knife and a white rope fell out of Hayashida's bag, who was dishevelled and unsightly after rolling around in the dirt.

"You can stab her, you can strangle her; just hurry up and kill her. If you can't, you'll die," Hiisu said carelessly. They were words his usually mild-mannered self would never use. "Look," Hiisu said to the corpse as he stooped down. "He may look refined but the things he did are despicable."

He was holding Hayashida down, who had backed off in alarm, by the collar as he tried to make him take the rope. Despite this, Hayashida had already wet himself in fear and was frantically out of his senses.

"Hiisu-kun!" Natsu's voice was sharp. "Why don't you do it yourself? It's something that no one but you can do, Hiisu-kun!"

Natsu tugged at Hiisu's suit once again and pulled him away from Hayashida.

"You were the one who said I shouldn't kill," Hiisu said, slowly looking back at Natsu.

"What are you saying? A dead person can't die twice!" Natsu was mad. At the same time, he was worried. "I said that you can't lend a hand in murder. If you don't do it, she'll kill Sensei!"

"This kind of man-"

"That's exactly it! I don't care what happens to such a vulgar, cruel man! But it'd be disgraceful to have that kind of man see her off in her final moments, Hiisu-kun!"

Beneath the faint light of the moon, the woman's slovenly corpse could not move from the spot. In addition, her soul couldn't leave. She was expected to wait as she decomposed and rotted away.

It wasn't that she cried and it wasn't that she resented them; she was just a corpse, leaning against a tree with her genitals exposed to people's eyes. Even if she was embarrassed, there was nothing she could do about it.

Perhaps the reason she didn't believe that she had been wronged was because she had been in love. Perhaps it was because, in her foolishness, she didn't want to admit it to herself. Even that the woman no longer knew.

"We have to let her be set free by someone like you, Hiisu-kun. We have to at least deliver her final moments with clean hands. Otherwise she won't be able to ascend!"

A bird cried out from far away. *There are birds that sing even at a time like this*, Hiisu thought to himself. He stood up slowly as though he supported a heavy burden.

I was disheartened but the bird responded to Natsu-kun's words and what he says is right. Clear, pure, clean. It is cruel, but right.

"You're right..." Still hanging his head, Hiisu stepped forward. "I suppose I'll have to do it after all."

One step, two steps, three steps.

Natsu watched over Hiisu's back in anticipation of a beautiful event or a happy ending. Hiisu took off his glasses, aware that Natsu expected something to happen, for her to be purified like in a movie he had seen sometime, to become a stream of light and ascend to heaven or possibly to become countless grains of light and sow seeds of new life in the forest. Was this what he expected from Hiisu?

A dead person can't die twice.

Natsu had said that, insisted that, and it was as he said.

Therefore, she wasn't dead. She had never died. Now he would have to kill her in the truest sense of the word himself.

Hiisu dropped both arms naturally, and then spread them slightly, his palms facing forward. Looking up at the sky, he quietly closed his eyes. A meditative silence surrounded Hiisu.

The woman watched as she leaned against the tree. He was the *Inugami-mochi* who had foiled her plans and trapped her in this rotting vessel, but she was dimly aware of what he was trying to do for her now.

But, she thought, *it's okay now*

As soon as the *Inugami-mochi* had stood there, staring at her with one eye of black and one eye of green, she had felt herself pleasantly drifting away upon a green lake, somewhere very cold, frozen and pure. Something rational was slowly accumulating in her head and she thought to herself,

This is enough. It's okay to be killed by this pure inugami.

Shh, Hiisu muttered.

Silence.

And

Thunder.

It all seemed to happen in an instant.

A thunderous wind roared as a huge, pale, three-nailed claw appeared over the woman's head. It was far from being ominous. Instead, it was unequivocally pure, it was nothingness.

Without fear or quivering in the face of nothingness, she wasn't even given enough time to feel some kind of emotion. Though, if anything, that was probably a blessing.

It ripped the atmosphere.

The huge, three-nailed talons came falling down from above the corpse's head.

It swallowed the trees, indiscriminately tearing at everything.

The wind raised into a crescendo, a piercing cry just like a curse.

And then it vanished.

***

Natsu slowly lowered his arms which he'd used to cover his face.

There was nothing there anymore. The corpse, its vacant stare and its tortured spirit had accepted the *inugami* and had disappeared from this world.

There was nothing.

In the heart of the forest where the woman had sat, toppling trees were marked with three great gouges – the ominous claw marks of the *inugami*.

Hiisu was crouched down, his fists clenched and his forehead pressed to the ground. He was shaking.

"My soul won't be allowed into Nirvana... It's nothing... I am *nothing*," He cried.

It was a moan that was neither anger nor sorrow.

Natsu went to Hiisu and softly patted his shoulder.

And then, he embraced him.

***

The milky-white light of the floor lamp dimly lit Hiisu's profile from jaw to cheek. He was probably already asleep.

Natsu continued to comb his hair.

Hiisu had said *ghost* as though he were someone indifferent to the existence of spirits. He might really be indifferent because to him, they are no different than a living human. That's why he didn't say things like *exorcise*, he said, *kill*.

When they had returned from the deep forest, Hiisu, worn out and exhausted, did not say anything. He was still dressed in the business suit he would have normally taken off right away. Instead, he bowed his head in a corner of the room. Natsu knew that words would only be superficial and useless. He had effectively caused a great deal of trouble for Hiisu.

After pushing Hayashida into a taxi and sending him home, Natsu took off Hiisu's jacket and made him eat some dinner.

Faced with a man that didn't even touch his chopsticks, he made no complaint and no attempt to cheer him up with cheerfully inane chatter. Natsu just silently waiting, determined not pick up his own chopsticks until Hiisu used his own. When he noticed Hiisu was worried and inadvertently picked up his own. That was enough.

After their drawn-out meal, they took a bath and Natsu carefully washed every part of Hiisu's body as Hiisu had always done for him. Natsu then wrapped Hiisu in a soft towl, patted him dry and presented him with clean underwear and pyjamas. He'd also tidied up the bed that Hiisu had been using up until eight months ago, intending to give it back to him tonight.

***

Two hours ago, Hiisu had meekly gotten into his futon but there was no way he could sleep until he resolved his feelings. Natsu sat beside his pillow, continually covering him with soft caresses such as stroking his hair and patting his shoulder. Natsu had been combing Hiisu's hair when his hand stopped.

It looks like he's finally fallen asleep. His breathing is becoming shallower.

Natsu stood up softly, attempting not to wake Hiisu.

He felt a soft tug on his pyjamas. Natsu looked back, surprised.

"You've come to hate me, haven't you?" Hiisu was looking up at Natsu with his green and black eyes full of tears. His face was pitiful, his eyebrows drawn together as if he were about to cry. Why was he asking such foolish things?

There was a mountain of things Natsu wanted to say to him, that the miserable soul turning into *nothing* was not his fault, that drifting about in the world in that state would have been infinitely worse... No one resented Hiisu. Natsu wasn't even sure that Hiisu should consider it a burden. Everything, in the end, becomes *nothing*. Even Hiisu's pain would be swallowed up.

I don't think there's such a thing as heaven. Everyone becomes nothing when they die.

But still, if something happened to be left, surely the expression that decomposing corpse showed in its final moments that peaceful face Natsu had definitely seen... What was there to wish for beyond that?

He mulled over saying something, but he didn't.
Hisu, who had faced the *nothingness* and had called on the *mugami* for such a long time, surely understood that sort of thing better than Natsu ever could.
"If I hated you, I wouldn't be with you like this." Natsu lifted the blanket and slipped in beside Hisu.
This is enough.
He snuggled up tight and held Hisu close.

Tonight, the pleasant body which was usually wrapped around Natsu, shook slightly and seemed a little vulnerable. Hisu cradled his head against Natsu's chest and rubbed against it over and over. It was the first time he had relied on Natsu like this.
I wonder if he'd smile if I said something.
If there happens to be a heaven, it's not some mystical world.
It's definitely here.

The End.

"Tanbishugi" Afterword

Somehow, I ended up naming this series in a rather exaggerated way. It's tough to have people think that I must be stuck in the eighth grade...
Having not written short stories in a while, I realized that even now, I still love the things that I loved in my teens. In those days, I was fond of beautiful words when I wrote short stories.

I've written some notes with a few hints concerning my works. Please refer to them if you ever find yourself thinking that you don't understand the significance of my textual references. You'll likely find spoilers as well, but for my works, it's far more enjoyable an experience if you understand the allusions. The first half of Tanbishugi is my self-professed 'Aesthetic Trilogy' or possibly 'Glasses Trilogy.' For some reason, I tried relating it to glasses characters.

'Like a Visconti Movie'

Written rather roughly, I believe that the act of destroying someone's "beautiful summer" is something both violent and stunning. I think that Misu-kun, who ended up forcing his ideals on Shino-san (who had deserted beauty), was quite brutish. I think the lengthy, hard-to-understand dialogue may have been funny, but I've always enjoyed that kind of thing.

'Romantic'

'Romantic' is written in a butler-like way. When I asked if it were okay to write a story with high information content, I got the okay from my careless editor and ended up with a sort of fusion between comic and short story with lengthy monologues. The themes, which I like, are abstinence and spiritual S&M. I also like the fact that everyone dies!
Because Konrad and the Viscount were so popular, their story ended up becoming serialized in BE-BOY GOLD. Please take a look at 'Grand Guignol' when you get the chance.

'Transfigured Night'

This story was written as a sort of punishment feature, which made it very painful to create the plot. Seeing the end of the pain is bad. There is no correct interpretation, but if you want to challenge that, the answer is in the last panel of the last page.
Schoenberg's 'Transfigured Night' has a strong sextet version and a string ensemble version. The one I'm imagining is the latter. Listen to the Karajan/Berlin Philharmonic/1973 recording. It's very beautiful.

'RSSRSSIN DROP'

This was a hard-boiled action story for chicks. It isn't aesthetic and it isn't BL. Sorry?
I was happy with my creations: Shitamachi and the characters of Ameya, Ruruko and Misemu. I think I'd be happy to draw a sequel someday.

'A MISERABLE OFFICE WORKER'

Written in a hetariman feature, 'Hetariman' is a dumsy (hetare) salaryman (aggressor-seme).
The title exists out of desperation. I tried abbreviating hetariman but I wouldn't have minded if it ended up as 'Hetare na Ma,' which means 'Clumsy Demon,' or something, though I don't know that much about inugami.
For me, Hasu and Natsu are unusual characters.

'GASPARD OF ENCROACHING DEATH'

Hasu and Natsu's short story is tinged with horror.
The idea of writing a short story made me very happy. When I was in my teens, I was continually writing short stories. It was a lot of fun and I never felt that writing was bothersome. I'd completely forgotten these kinds of feelings, but writing this made me remember. Because I wrote this story after college, I felt a little anxious. When I started, though, I thought, "This is fun, this is fun! I want to keep on writing stories! Stories are great!"
When I'm drawing comics as well, the sentences are always the first to arise, not the images. I think that the difficulty in reading my comics comes from that characteristic. Even now, I think that if I had the talent, I'd become a novelist.

I'm grateful to my editor, Iwamoto-san. Thank you for the very worthwhile discussions and advice. Furuwa, Gumi, K-Zue, Suu-san, M-ya, Amuru, thank you! Thanks, too, to my Mother and Father.
To those who read this, thank you. I would be happy to hear your opinions. I'm also happy that there are people other than me who like these kinds of things.

2009 April Motoi Madoru